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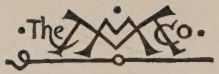
GREAT LEADERS OF HEBREW HISTORY



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GREAT LEADERS OF HEBREW HISTORY

FROM MANASSEH TO JOHN THE BAPTIST

BY

HENRY THATCHER FOWLER, PH.D.
Professor of Biblical Literature and History,
Brown University

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TO

DR. FRANK KNIGHT SANDERS

REVERENT AND SCHOLARLY INTERPRETER
OF THE BIBLE

FORMER TEACHER AND CONSTANT FRIEND

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
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EDITOR'S PREFACE

The "Great Leaders Series" aims to meet the needs of moral and religious secondary education. Adolescence is pre-eminently the period of Idealism. The naïve obedience to authority characteristic of childhood is to a large extent supplanted at this time by self-initiative; — by self-determination in accordance with ideals adopted or framed by the individual himself. Furthermore, the ideals of this period are concrete rather than abstract. They are embodied in individual lives, and, generally, in lives of action. Hence biographies of great leaders appeal strongly to the adolescent. They furnish examples and stimulus for conduct along the higher lines. The "Great Leaders Series" will include a large number of volumes devoted to the study of some of the greatest moral and spiritual leaders of the race. Although designed primarily for use in the class-room, they will serve admirably the purposes of a general course of reading in biography for youth.

E. Hershey Sneath.

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PREFACE

The present volume, the third in order of "The Biblical Literature Series," is designed primarily to meet the needs of students in the middle years of secondary instruction.

Leading American universities and colleges are now coming to allow one or two units of credit in Biblical history and literature among the regular elective subjects for college entrance. This fact promises to make it far easier than in the past for secondary schools to include Biblical study in the regular curriculum with the same intellectual standards that are maintained in the study of other histories and literatures. Such standards of work applied to the varied writings and stirring history of the Bible enable students of high school age to secure some true understanding of the Bible's contribution to civilization. At the same time, such study gives a broader and firmer basis for the use of the Bible in the development of personal religious life.

Even in advanced courses of Biblical study, much of the period covered in this volume is often neglected, although it is rich in inspiration and gives the essential background for an historical understanding of the New Testament. Available text books for the period are few, and the writer hopes that this book, in addition to its primary purpose, may fill a real need for ad-

vanced classes in Sunday Schools and in Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations. Possibly the general reader too may find some of the chapters opening up new fields of interest.

The book is planned with the thought that, where time is limited, only the text of the chapters need be studied. If it is possible to give two lessons to each of the thirty chapters, one of these may be devoted to the mastery of the text and the other to the study of the references at the close of the chapter. When the subject is to be offered for college entrance, the latter method should certainly be followed. In general, the references give the principal sources on which the statements of the text rest. Especially in Biblical study, where interpretations have differed so widely and where clear convictions are so vital to life and character, students may well be encouraged to go to the sources and make up their own minds as to the truth or error of conclusions drawn from these. In connection with some of the chapters, it will be practicable for each student to read all the references; where the passages are too long for this, assignments may readily be made for individual report.

HENRY THATCHER FOWLER.

Brown University,
14 May, 1920.

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APPENDIX

BOOKS FOR STUDENT AND TEACHER

Each student should be provided with a copy of the Bible, preferably the Revised Version. This both gives a more exact representation of the original than the King James Version and by its arrangement in natural paragraphs instead of short verses, makes connected reading more intelligible. The American Standard Edition, Minion 16mo. Black Faced, Self-Pronouncing, is recommended as convenient in size, inexpensive, and of good, clear type. The indication of the pronunciation of proper names is a particularly useful feature for students.

In connection with Chapters XXI and XXIII the references are taken from I Maccabees of the Apocrypha. The Revised Version of the Apocrypha is issued by the Oxford and Cambridge Presses. The King James Version will answer, however, for the selections from Maccabees.

The references for Chapters XXV to XXIX inclusive, are taken from Josephus. Fifty years ago, Whiston's translation of the works of Josephus was generally accounted an essential part of the equipment of an American home. If students have not inherited a set, they may well be encouraged to purchase an edition of Josephus as one of the foundations of a per-

sonal library. The translation by Shilleto, in five handy volumes, may be recommended.

Most of the standard Old Testament histories deal more or less fully with the period treated in the present volume. C. F. Kent, "History of the Hebrew People, Divided Kingdom," "History of the Jewish People, Babylonian, Persian, and Greek Periods," J. S. Riggs, "History of the Jewish People, Maccabean and Roman Periods," Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, will be found very valuable for the use of the teacher. H. P. Smith, "Old Testament History," Scribner, also deals adequately with the history down to the beginning of Herod's reign. E. Schürer, "Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ," 5 volumes, Scribner, is the great, standard work on the time from 168 B. C. onward. Shailer Matthews, "A History of New Testament Times in Palestine," The Macmillan Company, New York, is an admirable briefer treatment of the period covered by Schürer. Of the shorter histories, mention may be made of R. L. Ottley, "History of the Hebrews," Macmillan; I. J. Peritz, "Old Testament History," The Abingdon Press, New York; F. K. Sanders, "History of the Hebrews," Scribner.

The development of the Biblical writings in connection with the history of Israel is treated with some fullness in H. T. Fowler, "A History of the Literature of Ancient Israel," Macmillan, and in F. K. Sanders and H. T. Fowler, "Outlines for the Study of Biblical History and Literature," Scribner. The latter volume contains many references to the best critical works. I. F. Wood and E. Grant, "The Bible as Literature,"

Abingdon Press, and J. F. Genung, "A Guide Book to the Biblical Literature," Houghton-Mifflin Company, Boston, offer helpful material for the teacher.

The standard Old Testament "Introductions" of Driver, Creelman, McFadyen, Cornill, Gray, and Moore discuss the literary history of each Old Testament book.

Thorough articles on each Biblical book and leader of Hebrew history are given in "The Encyclopædia Biblica," 4 volumes, Macmillan, and Hastings, "A Dictionary of the Bible," 5 volumes, Scribner. Reliable briefer articles will be found in "The Encyclopædia Britannica," "The Encyclopædia Americana," Hastings, "Dictionary of the Bible Complete in One Volume," and "The Standard Bible Dictionary."

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EVANGELICAL
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GREAT LEADERS OF HEBREW HISTORY

CHAPTER I

MANASSEH, THE KING WHO TRIED TO STOP REFORM

The story in the second volume of Old Testament history and biography closed at a time when the nation of Judah was moving forward. This third volume begins with a king who tried to stop progress toward better things.

Manasseh's accession. King Hezekiah had undertaken reforms called for by the prophets Isaiah and Micah. Upon his death his twelve-year-old son Manasseh came to the throne. It seems scarcely probable that he could have become the real ruler in the state until he was a few years older. It may be that the forces of reaction found opportunity to overthrow the reform party while the king was still too young to control the government.

Forces of reaction. The reforms that had been carried out by Hezekiah must have had many bitter opponents eagerly watching for a chance to bring back the old conditions. When the farmers had poor crops or lost their cattle, they would be sure that the misfortune was sent by the old baals of the land who were

angry because their worship had been stopped. It might even be thought that the God of Israel was displeased because Hezekiah had interfered with his worship at some of the old high places. We can be sure that the land grabbers and bribe-taking office holders, who had been attacked by the prophets, would encourage such superstitious ideas. They all wanted to go back to the good old days when nobody interfered with their methods of getting rich. It must have been a time of great distress for all the rich money lenders, land holders, and government officials when King Hezekiah hearkened to the sermons of Isaiah and Micah, as they denounced growing monopoly of the land and all sorts of oppression of the poor. Such men would be the most powerful enemies of Hezekiah's reforms.

We do not know what the boy king thought at first of the changes made against his father's policies, but when he became a man, we find him in full sympathy with the party of reaction and foremost in bringing back all the evils that Hezekiah had sought to drive out. Either the influences that surrounded Manasseh's youth or his own evil nature brought this great misfortune to the kingdom.

Augury and enchantments. The earliest prophets of Israel saw the demoralizing influence of augury and enchantments, of dealing with familiar spirits and wizards. They taught that the God of Israel made his will known directly to the heart and conscience of the prophet who would listen to the still, small voice. The Canaanites, among whom the Hebrews had settled, and

the great nations outside with which they came in contact, still thought that the divine will was to be learned by consulting all sorts of omens. They carefully observed the shape of the liver or other organs of the bodies of the animals slaughtered for sacrifice, the flight of birds, and the movements of the heavenly bodies. They thought that some people were witches who could get information from superhuman beings or from intercourse with the dead.

We can realize how far the prophets of Israel were in advance of their times in opposing all such foolish, superstitious practices, if we remember that even the highly educated Greeks and Romans still thought such methods useful, many, many centuries after the prophets had tried to drive them out of Israel. It is not strange that the people and some of their rulers could not be led to take the high ground which the prophets demanded, without a long, hard struggle. So in Manasseh's day, when Isaiah and Hezekiah were dead, the nation readily turned back to augury and enchantments, familiar spirits and wizards.

Child Sacrifice. The people of Canaan and the districts round about believed that the gods wished men to give their most precious treasures as sacrifices to them, just as human kings wished the most costly tribute from their subjects. It was their custom, therefore, to seek divine favor by offering the most precious possession of all — their own children. Israel's religious teachers had very early struggled against this horrible superstition. The beautiful story of Abraham and his attempted sacrifice of Isaac will

be recalled as an example of how they tried to show the people that the God of Israel did not desire human sacrifice. In Manasseh's time even the burnt offering of children came back, along with the other religious practices which the prophets had tried to drive out of the land. No doubt king and people alike thought that only by restoring the old-time religion could they win divine favor and so secure prosperity.

The true God and popular rights. The people as a whole did not realize that the rights of the poor and weak against the rich and strong, which the eighth century prophets had demanded, would be lost along with the prophets' high idea of God. It was probably just about this time that a prophet who saw how the two things could be reconciled, wrote that wonderful little drama (Micah 6: 1–8) to teach that the true God did not desire tribute of rams or the firstborn son, but that men should do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with him.

Prophets silenced. Before many years all the true prophets were silenced by the ruthless king, who shed much innocent blood till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another. Late Jewish tradition has it that Isaiah was sawn asunder at this time. If the great prophet did live on till the opening of Manasseh's reign, it is not unlikely that his enemies then found their chance to inflict cruel death; even in extreme old age, he would have been a dangerous opponent of the forces of reaction. Except for a few sentences in the latter part of the book of Micah we have little or no

prophetic preaching that comes from the time of Manasseh. No doubt the much innocent blood that the king shed included that of any true prophets or their loyal followers who dared to defend the religion that Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah had preached in the preceding century. The new century, some thirteen years old at Manasseh's accession, would have none of it.

Anti-prophetic program. Manasseh and the anti-prophetic party did not content themselves with restoring the evils the great prophets had attacked; they had their own program to carry out. The program included the introduction of the gods of Babylonia into the very temple of Jehovah in Jerusalem. Manasseh may not have intended to exclude the God of Israel from the temple built in his honor three hundred years before, but at least the Lord must share his ancient house with the deities of the great eastern empires. For them the king erected altars in the two courts of the temple.

We can easily understand why Manasseh introduced the foreign gods. Although Assyria had met with disaster in her campaign against Egypt during the latter part of Hezekiah's reign, her power was not long withdrawn from Palestine. Esarhaddon came to the throne while Manasseh was still a youth and began a succession of campaigns against Egypt. Again and again his armies marched through Palestine. The next Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal, attained the long-sought goal, the conquest of Egypt. In the middle portion of Manasseh's long reign, the Assyrian king ruled

from Armenia to the upper Nile. Manasseh was his submissive vassal. In common with other kings of the west land, he is mentioned in the Assyrian records as providing timber for use at Nineveh and as furnishing his quota of forces for the campaigns against Egypt.

If Isaiah had lived, he would have seen his advice against Egyptian alliance fully vindicated. He might have approved Manasseh's paying of tribute, but he would most certainly have opposed the kind of submission that Manasseh adopted when he introduced into the temple altars for the eastern gods of sun, and moon, and planets. Manasseh and many of the people had no conception of the exclusive character of true Jehovah worship. To them it seemed the natural and politic course to honor the deities of the conqueror in the royal sanctuary at Jerusalem.

Secret activities of the prophetic party. On the surface of the nation's life, all was as dark as it could be for the religious and associated social reforms that the prophets had brought about, yet it was not possible for the new king and his nobles wholly to stop the great currents of truth that had swept on so gloriously in Hezekiah's reign. The stream might be forced under ground, but its pure waters would flow on, to burst forth again in a living fountain. From public speech, the true teachers of Israel turned to writing. The reign of Manasseh, so dark on its public side, became one of the most important epochs in the writing of the Old Testament.

Books of prophecy. Prophetic history. It was only now, we suppose, that the addresses of the four

great prophets of the previous century were collected and edited as small, separate books. The wonderful stories of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, and Samuel, preserved as separate histories in northern and southern Israel, were now put together in a much more complete form than they had been before. These stories were told in such a way as to illustrate the great truths that the followers of the prophets desired to preserve and impress upon the hearts of their countrymen. Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, the Judges, Samuel, and David passed in wonderful procession before the inner eye of those who read these stories, and spoke to their hearts the lesson that Jehovah alone should receive the homage of Israel and that his true followers should do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with him. Thus the historians who put together and enlarged the great treasury of national traditions from Judah and Israel in Manasseh's reign were able to teach the great truths of the prophets just as effectively, in the long run, as the prophets themselves could have done.

Composition of Deuteronomy. Another important work of Manasseh's time was the composition of the original book of Deuteronomy. The history of antiquity which had recently been compiled contained a short code of laws. These laws dealt with such subjects as the building of altars, observing Sabbaths and other religious seasons, the freeing of Hebrew slaves, assault and murder, kidnaping, stealing, putting a sorceress to death, sacrificing to any god except Jehovah, wronging the unprotected, foreign sojourner,

widow, or orphan. It was a code that in most of its laws embodied the ideas of the prophetic party and condemned the sort of thing that Manasseh and his party upheld. It was, however, brief and failed to deal with many duties that should be performed in carrying out the teachings of the great prophets.

Taking the little collection of laws already in existence as the basis, the authors of Deuteronomy prepared a much more complete guide for the daily life of the Hebrew. To the admirable laws of the earlier collection, it added many rules for the practice of justice and kindness. It made provision, for example, for the poor to have some share in the crops, or again, for the servants, foreigners, widows, and orphans to partake of the Thanksgiving dinner that was held in the fall when the grape harvest was gathered. As an introduction to the law code, they wrote a wonderful sermon urging the people to love Jehovah with all their hearts and to keep the laws of this God who dealt justly by those who were not able to protect themselves.

Manasseh's success and the prophets' success. The king had tried to silence in death the teachers who insisted that Israel should worship only that God whose true service required honesty, fair dealing, purity, and generous care for the helpless. He had succeeded to the extent of preventing their voices from being raised in the streets or the courts of the temple, but he had stimulated them to put their teachings into the more permanent form of written narrative, exhortation, and law. A little later this law book would lead to a great reform, far beyond that undertaken by

Hezekiah, and the writings would remain through many future centuries as inspiration and guide for the people of Judah and at last for all Christendom as well.

So long as Manasseh ruled, the old-new law code could not be publicly read, nor freely copied and distributed. It was hidden away somewhere about the temple and was probably forgotten. Its writers may even have died before a favorable opportunity came for publishing this very important book.

Manasseh ruled for about half a century. The national historian, who wrote a generation or two later, deemed the fifty years worthy of about five hundred words, and these, words of bitter condemnation. Looking back over the centuries we find the period illustrating some important truths of history. Efforts for social, political, and religious reform, even when they are successful, like those of Isaiah and Micah, often rouse the forces of evil to counter attacks which sweep back the forces of progress and leave the trenches in the possession of the grafters, monopolists, and cheats, supported by the men who think that religion is all a matter of forms and worship which ought not to get into business and politics. So it was in Manasseh's time, but " Rome was not built in a day," and it takes far longer to change this stubborn old human nature of ours than it does to build a city and empire.

Manasseh died and his son Amon followed in his father's footsteps during his short reign of two years. When his son, another boy-king, came to the throne, the forces of good came back to the attack with such

equipment as they had never had before. Their chief weapon was the book of Deuteronomy composed by men who dared believe that the will of God would yet be done on earth, though his followers had been defeated and his name dishonored. Because the book of Deuteronomy was composed in Manasseh's black reign, that half century was one of the most important periods in the history of ancient Israel. This should become clear as we study the next king. Manasseh might turn back the hands, but he could not stop the clock.

Important Biblical references: II Kings 20:21–21:26; Exodus 22:5–6, 25–27: 23:1–13; Deuteronomy 11; 15:7–8; 16:13–14; 20:19–20; 22:1–4, 8; 24:10–22; 25:13–16.

CHAPTER II

JOSIAH THE KING WHO LED THE GREAT REFORM

Josiah vs. Manasseh. Manasseh's son Amon was overthrown by a palace intrigue; then the people arose, killed the assassins, and placed the eight-year-old son of Amon upon the throne. It would be interesting to know more than we do of the influences which surrounded this boy-king for the next ten or twelve years. Whatever they were, while he was still a young man he completely reversed the policy of his father and grandfather. The history offers an interesting contrast to that of the grandfather, the other boy-king, who led the movement that tried to undo all the good achievements of his father's reign.

A prince prophet. The year that Josiah reached the age of twenty-one a notable prophet began to preach. His ancestry is traced back to a great-grandfather named Hezekiah. It is almost certain that this was King Hezekiah, also the great-grandfather of Josiah. In that case the prophet Zephaniah was of the royal family and a cousin, in some degree, of King Josiah. It has been conjectured that the prophet-prince may have been the instructor of the young king. Whether this is so or not, the history shows that the king was not the only worthy descendant of Hezekiah and that Manasseh had not been able to root out loyalty to Jehovah even within the royal family.

Influences favoring a change. Various forces united with the young king's character to make the time favorable for a new forward movement. Many who at first were in sympathy with Manasseh's policy must have been repelled by the extremes to which he had gone in introducing foreign worship and in persecuting the prophetic party. In addition, Assyria's star had begun to wane and the worship of the gods she honored would not now seem such a sure source of strength as it had a generation before. Just before Josiah's accession, the last great Assyrian ruler, Ashurbanipal, had four captive kings harnessed to his chariot to draw him to the temple of Ishtar at Nineveh. Victorious from Egypt to Armenia in the north and Elam on the south-east, this monarch ruled the largest territory ever controlled by the Assyrians. Judah was a tiny, vassal state in this great empire, honoring in the temple of its own god the deities worshipped by the great overlord, the splendid Sardanapalus of Greek tradition.

During the early years of Josiah's reign all was quiet in the empire, and Judah, with the other subject states, must have enjoyed an era of peace and prosperity. About the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign Ashurbanipal met his death, but before that the empire had fallen into confusion. The Median tribes in the mountainous territory to the east of Assyria, now welded into a sort of national unity, were making determined attack upon Nineveh. Psamtik, the vassal king of Egypt, had taken advantage of the situation to withhold tribute and make himself practically independ-

ent. Babylonia, under an able Chaldean ruler from the shores of the Persian Gulf, was about to throw off the Assyrian yoke entirely. At the same period, there appeared, pouring down through the passes of the Caucasus between the Black and Caspian, hordes from north of the Black Sea. These are known to us, by the name which the Greeks applied to them, as Scythians. The Greek historian Herodotus gives a vivid description of their wonderful horsemanship and fierce, barbaric warfare.

The Scythian invasion forced the Medes to raise the siege of Nineveh and gave the Assyrian capital a brief lease of life. The new invaders had no enginery for the conquest of a fortified city and swept on through Syria and down across the Philistine plain to the borders of Egypt, leaving devastation in their wake. After the Scythian invasion had spent itself, Media returned to the attack upon Nineveh, with the Chaldean ruler of Babylon in alliance.

It was when the Jews were looking out in horror from their rocky mountain sides upon the devastation being wrought by the wild hordes of Scythians on the plains below, that Zephaniah began to preach and that Jeremiah felt the prophetic call. The time was favorable for outspoken attack upon the gods of the Assyrians and all the evils that Manasseh had imported along with foreign worship.

Repair of temple. Five years later, King Josiah undertook the repair of Solomon's temple, now three and a half centuries old. This is the first great event after the king's accession that the compiler of the

Biblical history records. The king sent Shaphan, his secretary, to the temple to give directions to Hilkiah the priest for using the people's contributions made at the temple gate, in the employment of carpenters and masons and in the purchase of timber and hewn stone to repair the house.

The ancient historian records the fact, at this point in his story, that there was no necessity for careful watch and reckoning in the work because they dealt faithfully. He may have had in mind the occasion, some two hundred years earlier, when Joash had undertaken the repair of the temple and the priests had failed to use the contributions as ordered. At that time it had been found necessary to put a strong chest at the temple entrance, in which the people's money could be deposited and which was opened only in the presence of the chief priest and the royal secretary. Perhaps the priests then had felt that they were by ancient usage entitled to the temple payments and that the king had no right to appropriate them; in any case, there had been such a change in the two hundred years intervening between the repairs of Joash and those of Josiah that no question of misappropriation of the funds arose in 621 B. C.

Finding the law book. The repair of the temple might not be a matter of very great interest at this distant day, if it were not that the Book of the Law was brought to light in connection with the undertaking. Hilkiah the priest gave the book to the king's secretary, Shaphan, telling him that he found it in the

temple. The brief narrative does not make it clear whether the book had actually been lost and forgotten, in the years since it was written, or whether it had been recently placed in the temple, against the time when conditions should be more favorable for its publication.

That this Book of the Law was the original edition of our Deuteronomy and that it had been written sometime within the sixty-five years since Manasseh ascended the throne is now generally agreed among the students of Hebrew history. Something of the story of its writing and the nature of its contents was given in the previous chapter.

Law read before the king. When Shaphan came into the king's presence to report upon the beginning of the work, he also reported that Hilkiah the priest had delivered him a book and he read it before the king. This new law book contained some requirements that even the best men in Israel had never carried out. The principal one of these was that sacrifices to Jehovah should be offered only at the Jerusalem temple. The earlier code of law, of which Deuteronomy was an expansion and revision, had permitted altars to Jehovah to be set up in various places. In fact altars had been erected and sacrifices offered, without any questioning of legitimacy, in different parts of the land. Many of the locations were hill tops that had been sacred to the baals or gods of Canaan long before Israel came thither. At such places it was natural that offerings should be made to the deities who were earlier worshipped there, as well as to Jehovah. Thus the

debasing practices of idolatrous worship had become sadly mixed with the purer worship of the God of Israel.

Even to-day these ancient high places that were sanctuaries before the Hebrews came out of Egypt are sacred places to the Mohammedans who dwell near them. These simple people seem to have a good deal more faith in the spirit of some long dead saint whom they suppose to have been buried near the ancient sacred spot than in the one great god whom Mohammed preached. Many changes have come to Canaan since Israel settled there, more than three thousand years ago, but conquest by Hebrews, Assyrians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Saracens, and Turks, with all their religious changes, have not sufficed to destroy the faith of the people of the land in the sacred places where the Canaanites worshipped the Baalim and the Ashteroth.

The earlier law and the practice of the best men of Israel had sanctioned the adoption of these already ancient places of worship for Jehovah altars, but the law written in the seventh century B. C. by the followers of Isaiah and Micah undertook, with one sweep, to do away with all worship at these places. Its code begins with the demand that they destroy all the places where other gods have been served upon the high mountains and hills and under the green trees and bring their offerings to the one central sanctuary. This requirement, commonly known as " the law of the central sanctuary," is repeated over and over again throughout the entire code of Deuteronomy. The book goes on to

warn the nation that it shall be cast out of the land if it does not carry out this law strictly.

It is evident that before Josiah's time the religious leaders of Israel had not known any such law as this. The followers of the prophets who in Manasseh's time revised the old law had seen how easily the ancient, heathen practices had become mingled with those of Jehovah worship at the local altars and how readily, too, the worship of foreign gods had been brought into the central sanctuary at Jerusalem, but it would be much easier to keep the worship at this one place free from heathen admixture than to purify every village altar, so they made the one central sanctuary and the destruction of all the old places of worship the foundation requirement of the new code.

Huldah's approval of the law book. The religious practices, old and new, that are especially mentioned in connection with Manasseh's reign are specifically forbidden in this law that was read before Josiah. It is not strange then that when the king heard the book read, he rent his garments in anguish and sent to inquire the will of God concerning the words. The priest, secretary, and other representatives whom he sent went to Huldah the prophetess to get a Divine oracle. Why they consulted her rather than Zephaniah or Jeremiah, who had begun preaching in Jerusalem five years earlier, we cannot tell. Huldah proved a true phophet and declared that the threats of the book would be executed because the nation had forsaken Jehovah and followed other gods. She assured Josiah that the blow would not fall during his lifetime since he

had humbled himself before God when he heard the words of the law.

The Law enforced. The king now gathered the people together at the temple and read the newly-found law to them. Then he made a solemn promise to keep the law and immediately went to work to see that its requirements were fully carried out. He cleared out of the temple and destroyed all symbols of other deities; he suppressed the priests who had conducted worship at the high places, from end to end of Judah; he defiled the place where human sacrifices had been offered outside of Jerusalem so that it could no longer be used as a place of sacrifice. Some altars near Jerusalem were supposed to have been set up by Solomon. Josiah's great-grandfather, Hezekiah, had not ventured to destroy these. Despite their venerable age and connection with the name of the great king, Josiah did not spare them.

In his work of destruction, Josiah ventured beyond the territory of little Judah to Bethel, which had been a royal sanctuary of northern Israel. Now that Assyrian rule was relaxed, there was no one to prevent Josiah from assuming control over the territories of Israel as well as Judah. With all its sacred associations, much older than Solomon, the natural sanctuary at Bethel did not escape the reforming zeal of the king. He defiled the altar by burning upon it bones that he had brought out of neighboring tombs. According to the ideas of the people, this would make it a place where no god would come to receive offerings from his worshippers. All the sorcerers and wizards whom

Manasseh had encouraged were put away and everything that a king could do to make the people live according to a high and pure law of religion Josiah carried out.

Of the next dozen years, we have no account. Probably they were years of peace and prosperity with no startling events to record. Assyria was no longer able to enforce taxes, and Josiah must have ruled as an entirely independent monarch. Then once more the movements of the nations began to affect little Judah in a startling way.

Nahum and the fall of Nineveh. The Scythian invasion had spent itself and the Medes had renewed their attack upon Nineveh. It was probably at this time that the prophet Nahum gave his wonderful word picture of the siege and coming destruction of Assyria's capital. He described the city as a lions' den where the lion had brought the prey for his lioness and whelps to devour; now he sees the place in all the hurried and terrible confusion of siege.

Egyptian conquest. The king of Egypt, now free from Assyrian rule, saw the coming downfall and determined to seize the portions of the Assyrian empire that lay west of the Euphrates. For this purpose he marched through Palestine. Josiah did not intend to exchange his recently gained freedom for Egyptian vassalage. With heroic courage he marched the forces of his little kingdom to the pass through Mt. Carmel, by which the Egyptian forces would go from the Philistine plain to that of Esdraelon and so on across northern Palestine. It was the one place on the

line of march where he might hope to resist the great army of the Egyptians. Taanach and Megiddo, natural strongholds about three miles apart, flank the northern end of the pass. Near here, in the early days of Israel's struggle for the land, their light armed soldiers had cut to pieces the army of Sisera the Canaanite, with his chariots of iron.

Josiah's position was as well chosen as possible both to arouse patriotic hope and courage among his followers and to neutralize the advantage of the Egyptian numbers by reason of the narrowness of the battlefield. The endeavor was heroic, but the odds were overwhelming. Josiah was carried slain from the field to Jerusalem while the victorious forces of Pharaoh Necoh marched on through northern Palestine and Syria and seized all the land at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, as far as the Euphrates River.

Important Biblical references: II Kings 22:1–23:30; Deuteronomy 12:1–14; Nahum 2:1–3:7.

CHAPTER III

RE-AWAKENING OF PROPHECY IN JOSIAH'S REIGN ZEPHANIAH AND JEREMIAH

The thirteenth year of King Josiah was a fateful one in Jewish history.— The last great ruler of Assyria died, the Scythians swept down the Palestinian coast plain to the borders of Egypt, and prophets began once more publicly to warn and direct the nation.

Zephaniah like Amos. Though the hordes of Scyths do not seem to have climbed the rocky passes up into the Judean hills, their awe-inspiring presence, within view from the western spurs of the mountains, brought a sense of doom very near. The prince-prophet Zephaniah seized the opportunity to speak words of stern warning after the manner of Amos. The earlier prophet had taught that the day of the Lord could not be a favorable day for his people, unless all their conduct was in accord with his great demand of fair dealing. The people had thought that, since Jehovah was their God, his coming must be for their defence. Amos taught that God was not with them unless they were with him in purpose and conduct. For the nation to be with him meant that the rich and powerful should deal justly with the poor and weak, the judge should take no bribe, and the merchant should sell good grain by honest measure. The message that

Amos had announced to the people of northern Israel a generation before their nation fell is now taken up by Zephaniah for the need of Judah.

The day of the Lord. The advance of the barbarian horde affords the new prophet new imagery in which to express the older prophet's conception of "the day"— The great day of Jehovah is near, it is near and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of Jehovah; the mighty man crieth there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of waste and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm, against the fortified cities, and against the high battlements.

Corruption of Jerusalem. The evils that were brought in by Manasseh still exist although Josiah has now reached the age of manhood. The people worship the heavenly bodies upon the housetops; the nobles and judges devour like roaring lions and evening wolves that leave nothing till the morning. The prophets are treacherous and the priests violate the laws of the sacrifice, profaning the sanctuary. Such is the picture that Zephaniah gives of life in Jerusalem in the thirteenth year of King Josiah. We can well imagine that the nobles and judges and the professional prophets and priests thought it high time for Prince Zephaniah to be put to death. The foreign religions which had become popular under Manasseh did not interfere with their plundering practices. We have no record that any one ventured to lay hands on the troublesome prince. Probably the king was sympa-

thetic with his kinsman's message, although his great effort to reform religion and society was not made till five years later.

The little book of Zephaniah with its bold attacks upon the rich and powerful who were taking advantage of their opportunities for wrong doing, rouses our curiosity. We would like to know more of the man who dared to speak out in this way when all true prophets had so long been silent; but we know no more of him. Whether he preached again in later years, we cannot tell. If it was, as we suppose, King Hezekiah who was his great-grandfather, he could hardly have been an old man in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign. It seems probable that he lived on through the time of the great reformation and perhaps through the entire reign of Josiah.

Jeremiah's home. About the time when Zephaniah spoke his sharp warning to the rulers in Jerusalem, Jeremiah began his long prophetic career. Anathoth, his family home, lay three miles northward from the capital on the summit of one of the rounded hills that form the guarding wall of mountains round about Jerusalem. The modern village of Anata lies to the eastward of the highway that runs north from Jerusalem, aside from the regular lines of travel. The ancient road may have passed nearer to the village.—Isaiah pictures it as in the path of the Assyrian army coming from the north against Jerusalem. It was a town well known in Old Testament times. Late writers named it among the cities of the priests, and in the early days of the kingdom, Solomon had said to

the priest Abiathar: "Get thee to Anathoth and thine own fields; for thou art worthy of death,but I will not at this time put thee to death, because thou barest the ark of the Lord Jehovah before David my father." For many centuries Anathoth was evidently the home of men of priestly family.

The boy Jeremiah. While Josiah the king was still a boy and youth, there was growing up in this priestly city hard by the capital, a lad of sensitive, timid nature, who longed for companionship but could not easily make friends. He was neither a leader of other boys, nor could he readily join in the crowd that followed. Sometimes, not always, these youths who are kept apart and lonely because they cannot mingle freely with their fellows are the ones that later move the world. Although Anathoth was distant only an hour's walk from Jerusalem, the view toward the city was shut off and was open instead toward the valley of the Jordan and the Dead Sea, down across the desert wilderness. This gives an extensive, but solemn, outlook which might easily have a strong influence upon a sensitively organized youth.

Hosea's influence. The boy Jeremiah of Anathoth, in his lonely separation, was thinking great thoughts within himself. They were not thoughts of how great he would be some day and how he would show other boys what he could do. He was thinking, rather, how much his country needed knowledge of the Lord such as Hosea had talked about a hundred years before. He must have had a copy of the little book of the addresses and songs of that great, suffering prophet, and

he must have read it over and over again as he sat looking out over the barren hilltops that broke away below him down to the Jordan. The thought and the language of Hosea were so absorbed by the youth that when he began to preach it sounded as though the earlier prophet had come to life. While he loved Hosea best, this youth of priestly family was thoroughly trained in all the history and literature of his nation. It has been well said that " everything that was noble and worthy in Israel was known and familiar to him." In later years of his ministry he had his own distinctive message, but it grew up in a mind and soul that had been well prepared by study and knew how to apply old truths to new occasions.

Inaugural vision. While he was still quite young, before he felt at all able to undertake a man's work, there came to Jeremiah the sure conviction that Jehovah had set him apart, even before he was born, to do a great and difficult work. He felt that he did not know how to speak and yet that the Lord called him to stand up and give a message of destruction and doom. He must tell his own nation that God was about to send upon them a horde of enemies, because they had forsaken him and worshipped other gods. Kings, princes, priests, and people, he saw, would fight against him; but there came with this knowledge the assurance that the Lord would be with him to deliver him. Such convictions formed the substance of his inaugural vision and then the timid youth was ready to undertake his hard and lonely life work, set over the nations and over the kingdoms to pluck up and to

break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant. We may read Jeremiah's own account of this great experience in the first chapter of his book of prophecies.

We should remember that for some sixty years before this vision came to Jeremiah, the forces opposed to Jehovah's will, as interpreted by earlier prophets, had been triumphant in the land. If Zephaniah had already spoken in Jerusalem, it seems doubtful whether the youth in the little town outside knew of it; yet he was sure that Jehovah was not sleeping. He saw in vision a rod of an almond tree, as we translate the name. The Hebrew name means "wakeful" tree. With the simple poetry of people who live close to nature, they thus style the tree which blooms in the cold, rainy season of Palestine before any of the other plants think of awakening. To the youth of quick insight the winter blooming of this beautiful and useful tree spoke of the God who was wakeful over his word to perform it.

Traveling a few miles to the west and looking out over the Philistine plain, Jeremiah saw the barbarian hordes of the Scyths from the north sweeping down past the foothills of his mountain top home and felt, as Isaiah had taught in his day, that the neglected God of Israel was the God of nations who used their battle lust to bring his righteous judgment upon his faithless people. At the time of Jeremiah's call the Scythian hordes might well suggest a boiling caldron, the face thereof from the north. Before his life work should be done, the Babylonian hosts would also sweep

down from the north and they would overwhelm Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah.

Like his great master, Hosea, Jeremiah knew that Jehovah must tear up and break down the deep rooted evils and high piled wrongs of his people before he could build and plant in a land that was so choked with all the wicked heritage of Manasseh's reign. Self-centered dreams such as those of Joseph were not troubling Jeremiah. He was thinking of the sad prospects of his country and of the hard but necessary work he must do alone, trusting only in the unseen God whose voice he heard in the silence of his own soul.

First preaching. When the young prophet began to preach to his countrymen, he painted for them again in vivid words Hosea's pictures of God as the faithful husband and the father of Israel, while the nation was faithless and indifferent to him. His appeal to the unfaithful people is to return unto the Lord and then they will not be driven from the land. With these ideas he unites the policy that Isaiah and Hosea had urged in their time — keeping free from alliance with either Egypt or Assyria. He asks wherefore they go to Egypt to drink the waters of the Nile or to Assyria for those of the Euphrates. Such depending on their powerful neighbors shows that they have forgotten their God and do not fear him. The young preacher had read his Hosea and Isaiah to good purpose and knew how they had condemned little Israel's mixing in the ambitions of her great neighbors, making alliance now with one and now with the other, and never having a consistent policy for long.

National policy. Situated as his nation was between the two great rival powers of that age, her only hope lay in allying herself with neither, but always being true to each. Unless the people trusted in their God, they could not have the strength to follow this wise, consistent policy. Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Hosea saw this and labored against great odds to make the people true to Jehovah and true to each great neighbor.

The foe from the north. In his second recorded sermon our prophet deals with the approach of foes from the north which was so prominent a thought in his inaugural vision. He pictures them as coming from the uttermost parts of the earth with bows and spears, all riding on horses, set in array against Jerusalem. The description reminds one strongly of Herodotus's account of the Scythian hordes.

Jeremiah is very clear that his people deserve judgment. Even the religious teachers and guides are all corrupt. From the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. The prophets prophesy falsely and the priests bear rule by their means. The prophets and priests are only trying to furnish "what the public wants." They are keeping the fear of trouble and war away from the people, crying "Peace, peace" when there is no peace.

Jeremiah and the great reform. We cannot say whether Jeremiah went to Jerusalem to deliver his early addresses or confined his teaching in this period to his native town. Although Zephaniah and Jeremiah had begun their prophetic work fully five years before the Book of the Law was discovered in the temple it

was not either of them, we saw, but the prophetess Huldah who was consulted in regard to its trustworthiness. The preaching of the two great prophets, however, must have had something to do with preparing the way for the reform by arousing among their hearers some fear that Jehovah might execute judgment on the people who had been so unfaithful to him.

A narrative preserved in the book of Jeremiah seems to indicate that the prophet went about the streets of Jerusalem and the other cities of Judea preaching the message of Deuteronomy, but we cannot be sure how far he participated in the reform led by King Josiah.

Period of silence. The book of Kings is silent as to the years of Josiah's reign between the great reform of 621 and his death about 608. The book of Jeremiah contains no sermons or addresses that seem to fit into this Indian summer period. We can hardly imagine him idle during all this time. Perhaps when he composed his book of sermons in the changed times a few years after Josiah's death, he did not care to preserve his words of this period.

Important Biblical references: Zephaniah 1:1–2:6; Jeremiah 1; 2:1–4:4; 4:5–6:30; 11:1–8.

CHAPTER IV

STRUGGLE OF JEREMIAH IN THE TIME OF REACTION

Pharaoh annexes Syria. Events were moving fast in the history of the nations of southwestern Asia when Josiah met his death at Megiddo. Pharaoh Necoh marched on through northern Palestine and Syria, annexing all the land as far as the borders of Asia Minor and the Euphrates River. The next year Nineveh fell and the kingdom of Assyria was divided between Media and Babylonia. Nabopolasser, the Babylonian king, received for his portion the western parts as far as he could make good his claim against Necoh.

Nebuchadrezzar defeats Pharaoh. In 604 B. C., the decisive battle occurred at Carchemish on the Euphrates. The Babylonian army under the crown prince, Nebuchadrezzar, routed the forces of the Pharaoh. Jeremiah with keen sarcasm described the headlong flight of the Egyptian forces: Egypt riseth up like the Nile, and his waters toss themselves like the rivers; and he saith, I will rise up, I will cover the earth; I will destroy cities and the inhabitants thereof. Go up, ye horses; and rage ye chariots; and let the mighty men go forth. . . . Go up into Gilead and take balm, O virgin daughter of Egypt: in vain dost thou use many medicines; there is no healing for thee.

The nations have heard of thy shame, and the earth is full of thy cry; for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, they are fallen both of them together. All Syria and Palestine now lay open before Nebuchadrezzar, but just then his father's death called him back to Babylon. Necoh was, however, forced to make a compact by which he relinquished his ambitious claims in Asia.

Jeremiah's activity in Egyptian Period. These four years, from Josiah's death to the decisive battle of Carchemish, made a period of great activity for the prophet Jeremiah, now a man of mature years. Upon Josiah's death the people put his second son Jehoahaz upon the throne. As soon as the Pharaoh had time to organize the land which he had conquered, he deposed this prince, carrying him in bonds to Egypt, and put his older brother, now called Jehoiakim, upon the throne as a subject king whose duty was to rule the land and raise tribute for the Pharaoh.

Dirge for Jehoahaz. With the removal of Jehoahaz, the long silence of Jeremiah was broken, and his great life work really began. Apparently Jehoahaz was the choice of the reform party while Jehoiakim quickly proved himself hostile to all his father's policies. Chanting a dirge such as those composed for the dead, Jeremiah sang:

> Weep not for the dead, and mourn not for him:
> Lament for him that goeth away; for ne'er shall he return,
> And never shall he see the land of his birth.

He then explained that the young king who had been

carried to Egypt would never be allowed to return. Mourning for Josiah should give place to lament for his son, already as good as dead.

Superstitious faith. The prophet soon felt called to teach the people assembled in the temple court. He found that they had a superstitious trust in the sanctuary, regarding it as Jehovah's castle which he, like any great king, could not permit to be captured. The belief had probably grown up out of the great deliverance in Isaiah's time, almost a century before. At that time, the people in panic fear were about to make an unnecessary surrender of Jerusalem to the Assyrian army; but Isaiah assured them that the temple and city could not be captured. The promise was fulfilled; a pestilence broke out in the Assyrian army, and the remnants of the great host withdrew from the land. It was not strange that the people had come to think of the temple as the palladium of their city, which no Ulysses and Diomedes could carry off as they did the statue of Pallas on which the safety of Troy depended.

They liked the belief because it left them free, as Jeremiah boldly told them, to steal, murder, and lie, and yet feel perfectly safe from punishment, because there stood the temple of Jehovah. They could go into its courts and call upon him, feeling sure that he could not permit any enemies to break into his castle enclosure.

They liked to forget the great teaching of Deuteronomy which had been adopted as the supreme law of the land only about fifteen years before. The great law book reiterated over and over again that

God would permit them to live securely in the land only on condition that they were true to him. Jeremiah advised them to visit Shiloh and see how the first sanctuary set up for Jehovah, when Israel entered the land, had been laid waste. He warned them that the fate of Jerusalem and its temple would be no whit different. Assuring them that they would fare just as northern Israel had done, he burst forth in a song of doom beginning:

This is the nation that hath not hearkened to the Lord's voice,
And hath not received instruction; truth hath perished;

and ending:

Then will I banish from the cities of Judah, and from the streets
of Jerusalem,
Voice of mirth and voice of joy,
Voice of bridegroom and voice of bride;
For waste shall be the land.

Jeremiah's trial for treason. The priests, prophets, and all the people could not permit such words of threat to pass. They seized Jeremiah, crying out: "You must die." As the angry crowd threatened, the princes came up from the king's palace, a few steps below the temple court, and sat to hear the case. The priests and prophets accused Jeremiah of speaking treason worthy of death. He replied, not denying a word that he had uttered, but declaring that he had spoken at the command of God. He followed with an appeal to all to change their course of life and avert the coming doom. He told them that he was in

their hands: they could do with him whatever they saw fit, but if they killed him they would bring innocent blood upon themselves and the city. He was not speaking human treason, but giving the warning of God.

In the Orient, to be guilty of innocent blood means sure vengeance and to interfere with one who speaks under the inspiration of God is no less dangerous. So the fickle people turn against the accusing priests and prophets and support the princes, who decide that in giving God's warning, Jeremiah had not been guilty of treason. Now some of the old men remember how the prophet Micah had predicted Jerusalem's ruin when Hezekiah was king, and how instead of putting him to death, the king repented and the city was saved.

The story gives a good idea of how largely Judea was in spirit and practice democratic, even though there was a king. The princes of the palace held a sort of judicial trial, but the elders and people took part in the proceedings as they saw fit. The scene introduces us also to the great tragedy of all the later years of Jeremiah's life. He is acquitted of treason this time, but the divinely enlightened prophet is doomed to see his country go on step by step to ruin, while rulers and people count him their enemy and consider him a traitor.

Lesson from the potter. As yet the nation is not at war; it is living peacefully in vassalage to Egypt, but Jeremiah sees that his people's blind trust in the temple to protect them whatever they do, is sure to lead on to destruction. At this time, he feels that it is

not too late for the little nation to change its course and be saved. He uses every means to get his message into the heads and hearts of the people. At the potter's house he watches the making of earthen vessels. On a little round table that turns about, the workman places a lump of clay and then by foot-power sets it whirling and with a tool shapes the vessel as he will. In much the same way, the mechanic of today shapes wood or metal on a lathe, only the soft clay had to rest upright instead of horizontally. As Jeremiah watched the work go on, he saw that sometimes the vessel was spoiled in the making, and that the workman used the clay to make a different article.

The potter was one of the most familiar figures in Jerusalem and other ancient towns from the earliest times when cities were built. The people must often have seen just such a change of plan as Jeremiah watched, when something went wrong with the clay. The people who thought that God was bound to bless them just because they were his nation were now taught that what God might make out of the clay in his hands must depend on the quality of the clay. If he had pronounced judgment on a nation for its sin and the people turned from their sin, the judgment would be averted. So too when he had promised blessing, if the people proved evil their fate must be changed.— Judah has forgotten God, she shall be scattered before her enemies.

Plots against Jeremiah. With such ideas, Jeremiah is setting himself up against the popular teachers, the priests, prophets, and philosophers, who teach that the

nation shall prosper. Plots are formed against his life. A certain man named Uriah, who prophesied similar judgments in the name of Jehovah, fled to Egypt from the wrath of King Jehoiakim; he was brought back and put to death, but Jeremiah for the time escapes the threatened danger.

Certainty of coming doom. Undeterred by plots against his life, he preaches again and again his message of doom. He feels that the people's guilt is too great to be forgiven. They have as many gods as cities, as many altars as there are streets in Jerusalem. They are past praying for. Jehovah cannot hear their cry, even if they fast before him, nor accept their offerings. When he pleads with God for the people, he is assured that if even Moses and Samuel were the advocates, they could not secure the people's release. So sure is Jeremiah of the approaching downfall of the nation that he will not marry and have wife and children to die by the pestilence and sword and famine that are certain. He even feels that he must not share the ordinary joys and sorrows of his friends; he must neither go into the house of mourning to mourn with them nor into the house of feasting to eat and drink with them. He must stand apart as a symbol of the stunning grief that will fall upon the people so that there will not be ordinary mourning nor rejoicing.

In the stocks. Perhaps it is not to be wondered at that plots were made against Jeremiah. The men of his own town, Anathoth, sought his life, forbidding him

to prophesy in Jehovah's name on pain of death at their hands. Pashhur the priest and chief officer of the temple submitted him to public disgrace as a common disturber of the peace, putting him into the stocks where all who came to the temple might see and revile him.

Fellowship with God. Loneliness and hostility wore heavily upon Jeremiah, who was trying to turn his people from sin to righteousness and to deliver them from the sorrows which he foresaw they would bring upon themselves. In his sorrow, he was driven to talk out his complaint with God. He argued with the Supreme Ruler about the wicked being permitted to enjoy good fortune and those who dealt treacherously being left at ease. And then he received a curious answer within his soul — He has been running with the footmen and is tired, yet he has got to race against horses. He is troubled because his neighbors are plotting against his life and are not punished. How will it be when he knows that his own brothers of his father's house are likewise among the plotters?

When he has been made an object of public contempt in the temple stocks, he cries out against God who has led him on till he is an object of public ridicule. Whenever he speaks, he warns of violence and spoil, and the people just laugh at him. Yet he cannot help speaking; if he tries to keep still then is a burning fire in his bones. In his anguish, he bursts forth with cursing upon the day of his birth. Jeremiah is no calm, marble saint. He is a very human

man, with a very human longing for friends and relatives to honor and trust him, instead of ridiculing and plotting. Perhaps the ridicule was harder to endure than the plots.

Jeremiah's very loneliness forced him to find fellowship with the God he sought to serve. Never before in the Bible's history do we find any man going to his God with such constancy and freedom, to talk out the things that were in his heart. There is nothing formal about his prayers. He comes to know his God as one more ready to listen to the trouble in the heart than one's best friend or nearest relative. At times the prophet may seem almost irreverent to those who are accustomed to make formal prayers to a distant Deity. Jeremiah does not pray that way. To him, God is "nearer than breathing, closer than hands or feet." When he has spoken with utmost frankness, he finds strength and confidence to go on his hard and lonely path even though he is made a public laughing stock.

Prophecies written. After a time he is absolutely restrained from preaching to the crowds in the city streets as he has been doing so constantly since Jehoiakim came to the throne. So he takes one of the long rolls of parchment on which books were written in those days, and dictates to Baruch ben-Neriah the message he had delivered regarding Judah and Jerusalem and all the nations from his first preaching in the days of Josiah on to that day, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign.

Book read and burned. The following year, the

celebration of a great fast in Jerusalem gave an opportunity for Baruch to read from this collection of Jeremiah's sermons to the people who stood and listened in the upper court. The reading was soon reported to the princes in the royal palace; Baruch was brought down to read the book over again to them. Alarmed as they heard the warnings in the name of Jehovah, they felt that the king ought to know, yet they realized that it would be dangerous for Jeremiah and Baruch when Jehoiakim heard the book read. They advised the prophet and his secretary to hide themselves so that no one should know where they were and then read to the king. After listening for a little, the king took the parchment, cut it into bits with his knife, and watched it burn in the brazier of fire that was before him. The princes begged the king not to treat these God-sent prophecies with such scorn, but to no avail. He burned the book and then he sent his son and officers to try and sieze Jeremiah and Baruch.

Prophecies rewritten. So, through this act of bravado on the part of Jehoiakim, all the prophecies that Jeremiah had uttered in the five years before the great reform of Josiah and in the first four years of Jehoiakim's reign were now preserved only in memory. But the prophet would not leave it so. Safe in his hiding place, he dictated again to Baruch, reproducing the first book and adding awful denunciations upon Jehoiakim. This second and enlarged edition must be the nucleus of our book of Jeremiah, to which many later prophecies were to be added from the prophet's

own dictation and from the memory of Baruch and other loyal followers.

Important Biblical references: II Kings 23: 31–37; Jeremiah 46: 1–12; 22: 10–12; 7: 1–15; 11: 9–14; 16: 1–13; 11: 18–23; 20: 1–18; 12: 1–6; 36: 1–32.

CHAPTER V

HABAKKUK, JEREMIAH, AND THE COMING OF THE BABYLONIANS

It was not long after the burning of Jeremiah's book that the scornful king, who had been so confident in Pharaoh's protection, had occasion to recall Jeremiah's warnings. Nebuchadrezzar's victory at Carchemish on the Euprates left Necoh very glad to get behind the hundred mile strip of desert separating Palestine from Egypt.

Habakkuk and the sin of Jerusalem. At about the time that Nebuchadrezzar was marching up the Euphrates, a new prophet raised his voice against the injustice and wickedness that prevailed under Jehoiakim's rule. He saw the wicked swallowing up those more righteous, and yet God, the Holy One, kept silence. Perplexed, he took his stand upon his watchtower and waited for an answer to his complaint. Waiting and watching, he has a vision of the judgment that is about to fall upon all those who are proud and treacherous and heap up that which is not their own. In the advancing Babylonians, that fierce and impetuous nation, he sees the Divine instrument about to execute sentence upon his own corrupt people. Their horses are swifter than leopards; their horsemen fly as the eagle on its prey; they gather up captives like sand and laugh at

kings and princes and fortresses resisting their victorious progress.

Perhaps the Babylonian prince, Nebuchadrezzar, had already won his great victory over the Egyptian forces, at the ford of the Euphrates, when Habakkuk received this answer to his question, how long will God delay to punish the men who prosper under Jehoiakim's cynical rule? The protection of the Pharaoh could not much longer support this régime.

The instrument of punishment. When he sees in the Babylonians the instrument of punishment, a new problem arises for the prophet. How can a just God use such a conqueror to punish men that are better than the executioner? He is face to face with a great question that has puzzled men even down to our own day, and no full answer is given him. As we look back, knowing the history of the years that followed the conquest of Nebuchadrezzar, we can see that the Chaldean conquest was indeed a refiner's fire that burned much dross of cruel wickedness out of the hearts of Habakkuk's countrymen and made them better fitted to be called the people of God. Habakkuk was right, as we can see, in recognizing the Chaldean lords of Babylon as the Divine instrument. Although they gloried in their own power and strength and did not recognize Jehovah, he could use them in purifying his corrupt people.

Jeremiah's seventy year prediction. That same fateful year, Jeremiah declared to the men of Jerusalem that Jehovah would take the Babylonians and bring them from the north against Judah and her

neighbors. Then the voice of mirth and gladness and the sound of the peaceful millstones with which the women ground the family flour, sitting safe before their doors, would all be silenced in the desolation of war. For the round number of threescore and ten years, a long lifetime, they would be a subject people. This is Jeremiah's famous seventy year prediction which has caused so much perplexity in all ages since for those who have tried to find the limits of the captivity in an exact period of seventy years. In the second century before Christ, we shall find the writer of the book of Daniel feeling that the full scope of Jeremiah's prediction had not yet been fulfilled, interpreting the seventy years as seventy weeks of years — seven times seventy.

The change of rulers. Neither Habakkuk nor Jeremiah overemphasized the Babylonian victory. The battle of Carchemish was a turning point in the history of the world's great empires. It determined that the Egyptian empire in Asia could not be revived and began the short but magnificent imperial rule of the Chaldeans, with Babylon once more the center of a great empire.

Jehoiakim rebels. Compared with the Assyrians, who practiced systematic frightfulness almost like that of Prussian militarism, the rule of Nebuchadrezzar over subject peoples was clement. In Palestine he permitted Jehoiakim to continue as king of Judea, and life went on in Jerusalem much as it had before the king was forced to change masters. Jehoiakim, however, preferred dependence upon Egypt which had

given him his power, or thought Babylon too far off to hold him in subjection, and, after a few years, rebelled.

At first Nebuchadrezzar did not come in person with a great army to discipline this border city, distant a march of some nine hundred miles from his capital. Instead, he tried instigating Judah's hereditary enemies round about to attack her. These could overrun the land, but they could not capture strong walled Jerusalem. At length, in 597 B. C., Nebuchadrezzar sent a Babylonian army to deal with the rebellious city.

Jeremiah contrasts Jehoiakim and Josiah. In these years of approaching doom, Jeremiah continued his active teaching. With biting sarcasm, he contrasted Jehoiakim's rule with that of his father Josiah. Describing the fine palace that Jehoiakim had been building and decorating, Jeremiah asked whether he thought that made him a king. His father executed the law and did justice, giving the poor man a fair hearing. That sort of conduct, Jeremiah thought, made a real king, and was real religion too. But Jehoiakim was bent on dishonest gain, shedding innocent blood, and oppression. Jeremiah declared that such a ruler when he died would not be honored even by the customary song of the hired mourners. His burial would be like that of a dead ass that is dragged out of the city and cast forth.

The wasting of the land. The prophet gives a vivid picture of the devastation of the land. Probably this was at the time the marauding bands of Syrians, Moab-

ites, and Ammonites were laying the country waste. He tells of destroyers who have come up on the bare heights of the wilderness of Judea. Few scenes are more barren of green herbage than the brown, tumbled hilltops by which the plateau of Judea breaks down to the plain of Jericho thirty-five hundred feet below. The region is perfectly suited to guerilla warfare. Small, light-armed bands skulking in the valleys might easily elude large companies of pursuers. After the capture of Jerusalem by General Allenby in December, 1917, it was some little time before his disciplined forces, even when assisted by aeroplanes, were able to clear this district east of Jerusalem and down to the Jordan.

Up these same valleys and over these broken hills, Nebuchadrezzar's raiders, stirred up from the regions across the Jordan and eager for plunder, would come to fall upon those who ventured outside the city walls, even over to the slopes of the Mount of Olives. They would overrun, too, the cultivated plateau on which Jerusalem stood, so that the sword devoured and no flesh had peace. Instead of the ripened wheat, the reapers found only thorns to cut. Like Isaiah before him, Jeremiah styles Judea Jehovah's vineyard. It is a vineyard into which the beasts of the field have broken to devour and where the shepherds themselves, the rulers, have trampled down the vines.

Approach of the Babylonian army. The devastation of the marauders is followed by the approach of Nebuchadrezzar's real army. In a song of lamentation over the sure fate of his loved city, Jeremiah calls

upon his hearers to give glory to Jehovah before it is too late. If they will not hear, his soul must weep in secret for their pride, and his eyes run down with tears for the captivity of Jehovah's flock.

The "weeping prophet." Jeremiah is commonly known as "the weeping prophet" and is often pictured with face turned away in the attitude of hopeless grief. He had reason to weep, and he did weep on occasion; but we have already seen enough of his courageous deeds and heard enough of his fearless words withstanding king, priest, and people, to realize that the usual pictures are a sad slander on Jeremiah. Even when the city is besieged and the people from the country round have crowded in, helping to use up the limited supplies of grain, Jeremiah does something besides lament.

Lesson from the Rechabites. Among those who have taken refuge in the crowded town is a company of Rechabites. These men have resisted the civilization of city life and settled, agricultural life. For two hundred and fifty years, they and their fathers have been banded together to live in the open as Bedouin wanderers in the midst of the developing civilization of Palestine. They traced their clan organization back to Jonadab the son of Rechab who participated in Jehu's revolution when Jezebel was slain.

In the crisis of 597 B. C., Jeremiah gets this strange group to come with him into one of the chambers of the temple. A growing crowd, filled with curiosity, must have followed along the narrow streets as Jere-

miah led the men to the temple court and up into the chamber of Johanan, which was by the chamber of the princes and above that of the keeper of the threshold. Some of the temple officers and a part of the people may have come in, but probably most of the crowd had to wait outside while the prophet was in the upper room with the Rechabites. In the crowded room, these men who were unaccustomed to any roof except the black, goats' hair cloth of their tents were tried with the temptation of the city. Jeremiah set before them bowls of wine with cups and invited them to drink.

The prophet knew full well that one of the luxuries of Canaanite agriculture and city life which these men had always refused to accept was the fruit of the vine. He knew how strong was their pledge and how their clan had guarded it for long centuries. That was just the reason he had brought them here for an object lesson. The men answered him: "We will drink no wine; for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your son forever: neither shall ye build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any; but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land wherein ye sojourn. . . . We have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us."

Now Jeremiah has his object lesson; he goes out and tells the people in Jerusalem how faithful these men are to the command of their ancestor, while the people of Jerusalem are so faithless to Jehovah's command. Jehovah will bless the Rechabites for their faithfulness

and he will bring upon Judah and Jerusalem all the evil that he has promised against them.

Death of Jehoiakim and warning to new king. Before the full measure of well merited fate fell upon the city and its king, Jehoiakim died and left his wife and eighteen year old son to face the wrath of Nebuchadrezzar. Jeremiah declared in Jehovah's name that though the young king wore the very signet ring of the Lord, he and his mother should be cast out and none of his seed should sit upon the throne of David. He and his mother must go into far captivity, never to return to native land.

Jerusalem's surrender. Perhaps the warnings of Jeremiah influenced Jehoiachin and his advisers in their decision to surrender to the Babylonians, three months after Jehoiakim's death. The king, the queen mother, the royal attendants, and officers all went out from the city and gave themselves up as prisoners. The conquerors plundered temple and palace. The sacred golden vessels that had been under the protection of the dynasty since Solomon's time, almost four centuries earlier, were now booty for the conqueror whose wrath Jehoiakim had so persistently invited.

The first deportation. Following the policy of deportation that the brutal Assyrians had developed to break the power of resistance in conquered peoples, Nebuchadrezzar carried off to Babylon ten thousand men, besides women and children. These were the very bone and sinew of the little state — princes, warriors, and skilled artizans.

Settlement in Babylonia. Nine hundred long and

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weary miles, up through northern Palestine and Syria, past the Lebanons, and over the dreary plains to the Euphrates; then down the long, long river valley, day after day and week after week, the wretched exiles, footsore and disheartened, went their weary way, under guard, until they came to the hot, dusty plain of Babylonia. Here they were settled in communities, one of which at least was on the bank of one of the sluggish canals that interlaced the plain, bringing water for the land and controlling the spring floods of the rivers. A few years ago, American excavators discovered an inscription that identified this canal, the Chebar, as one that ran southeastward of the city of Babylon, past the old city of Nippur.

The men of Judah, accustomed to their mountain air, and loving their highland scenery, as all hill people do, suffered sadly on those intensely hot, monotonous plains. They seem to have been allowed a large measure of freedom to live according to their own customs in the communities where they were settled, and to receive messengers who came, from time to time, from their old home, but their hearts were sad and weary. One of their own poets later pictured their feelings:

> By the rivers of Babylon,
> There we sat down, yea, we wept,
> When we remembered Zion.
> Upon the willows in the midst thereof
> We hanged up our harps.
> For there they that led us captive required of us songs,
> And they that wasted us, mirth.

Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
How shall we sing Jehovah's song
In a foreign land?

Important Biblical references: II Kings, 24: 1–17; Habakkuk 1: 1–2: 4; Jeremiah 25: 1–14; 22: 13–19; 12: 7–14; 13: 15–17; 35; Psalms 137.

CHAPTER VI

JEREMIAH AND THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

The Jews in Judea and Babylon. When Jehoiachin was carried to Babylon, his father's brother was left as native ruler over the despoiled and partly depopulated country. Jeremiah's opinion of this king and the men who were left behind under his rule was very uncomplimentary. They were disposed to pride themselves on being favored of Jehovah over the exiles upon whom the judgment had fallen. He told them that, on the contrary, the exiles were the fine, large, first-ripe figs, while they who were left were the bad figs that nobody could eat. God would watch over and restore the good figs, but the new king Zedekiah and the other bad figs would be utterly consumed out of the land.

Jeremiah and the prophets of false hope. Jeremiah wrote a letter to the exiles in Babylonia, advising them to settle down there to normal life, building houses, planting gardens, marrying, rearing families, and seeking the peace and prosperity of the land to which they had been carried. He warned them not to believe the prophets among them who were promising that they would soon come back. The seventy years which he had predicted must first be fulfilled. We know the names of some of these misleading prophets among the

exiles whose lives were as unworthy as their hopes were delusive. Two bore the royal names of Ahab and Zedekiah. Another, Shemiah, wrote to the priest who was now in charge of the Jerusalem temple, declaring that it was the priest's duty to put in the stocks such a mad man as Jeremiah who pretended to be a prophet. The new priest read the letter to Jeremiah, perhaps as a warning of what he might expect. Jeremiah replied by writing to the exiles, denouncing Shemiah as one who had no Divine commission as a prophet.

In Jerusalem, too, prophets of false hope and evil life were active. Jeremiah found both prophet and priest shamefully corrupt. He declared that, if these prophets had really stood in God's counsel and heeded his words, they would have turned back the people from their evil deeds.

Test of true prophet. It was not easy for the people to tell who was the true prophet, the one who warned of coming danger or the one who promised speedy deliverance. Jeremiah is the first to give the true test: is the teaching morally right? Six hundred years later Jesus gave his hearers a similar test when he warned them to beware of false prophets. He told them that they should know them by their fruits and went on to say: "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." More than once Jeremiah gives us a foretaste of the best truths of the New Testament. This is one of the in-

stances and is one of the high water marks in the Old Testament.

The false teachers claimed that God had spoken to them in dreams and that they could tell what was going to happen. Jeremiah said that the true word of God was like a fire or like a hammer that breaks rock in pieces. Men are ever setting up other tests, but Jeremiah and Jesus give us the true tests of the teacher who has the word of God. It is a life that bears good fruit, that does the will of the Father; it is a teaching that burns and breaks the evil out of men's lives.

Alliance against Babylon. Some four years went by and the prophets, priests, and people who did not see that the people must be purified by long exile and suffering had their way in a conspiracy of the southwestern provinces to rebel from Nebuchadrezzar. Messengers came to King Zedediah from Edom, Moab, and Ammon, over on the borders of the desert, and from Tyre and Sidon, up on the sea coast. Jeremiah put a yoke on his neck, so that these ambassadors might carry back word to the kings who sent them that God, who made the earth, had put all these lands, for the time, under the yoke of Nebuchadrezzar. He gave the same message to King Zedekiah and urged the people and priests not to listen to the false prophets who were still promising that the vessels of the temple would soon be brought back from Babylon. On the contrary, he told them that they themselves would be taken there.

The false prophets knew as well as Jeremiah how to

make an impression on the people. One of them, Hananiah, predicted that Jehovah would return the captives within two years and, in the presence of the priests and all the people in the temple, he tore the yoke off Jeremiah's neck and broke it. No doubt the crowd laughed and jeered as Jeremiah went away without his alarming yoke on his shoulders. Soon he was back with a yoke of iron in place of that of wood and with a promise of death within the year for Hananiah.

Coming of Babylonian army. There is some indication that Zedekiah was summoned to Babylon to give an account of this threatened rebellion. However that may be, the negotiations of the western princes seem to have fallen through, for it is not until some four years later that we find Judea in actual rebellion. By 589, however, it had become necessary for Nebuchadrezzar to send an army, as he had done eight years before.

When the evident danger was at hand, the king turned to Jeremiah feeling that he had true wisdom from God. He hoped for a promise of mercy, but he received answer that Jehovah himself would fight against them. Pestilence would break out in the besieged city; the king, his servants, and the people who escaped from sword, famine, and disease would be delivered up to Nebuchadrezzar. To the people, he declared that their only hope was to desert to the Chaldeans because Jehovah had determined to give over the city. When the Babylonian forces had overrun all Judea and only the capital and two other fortified

towns were holding out, Jeremiah promised a peaceful end for King Zedekiah, if even now he would listen to God's word.

Release of slaves. Zedekiah made some attempt to reform the practices of the people in accord with the humane law which required the release of all Hebrew slaves at the end of six years. In their dire distress the people agreed to proclaim a general release. Soon the sincerity of their reform was tested. Pharaoh came out with an army from Egypt and Nebuchadrezzar was forced to raise the siege of Jerusalem in order to meet the danger. Jeremiah warned the king that the Egyptians would retire and that the Chaldeans would return, but the people, mad with joy at their sudden release, took their slaves back into bondage. Relief from danger had come and it was not necessary to be good any more. As they refused freedom to their fellow Jews, Jeremiah proclaimed freedom to sword, pestilence, and famine.

Arrest of Jeremiah. The temporary withdrawal of the besiegers gave Jeremiah an opportunity to start for his native town of Anathoth to attend to some business connected with his family estate. As he was going out of the city gate the captain of the guard seized him and accused him of deserting to the enemy. The prophet's denial availed nothing and he was cast into prison. After he had been many days in the dungeon, Zedekiah had him secretly conducted to his palace, hoping to get from him a promise of deliverance. No doubt the Chaldeans had already returned to the siege. The king got no hope from Jeremiah,

but he did listen to the prophet's plea for release from the deadly dungeon and only confined him to the court of the guard where he was given an allowance of bread as long as the supply lasted.

Left to die in the empty cistern. The milder imprisonment was not to last, for the leaders of the party that was determined to resist to the last forced the king to give Jeremiah into their hands. Once in their power, they let him down with cords into an old cistern in the court of the guard, there to lie and starve in the mud at its bottom. Any one who has peered down into the old, dark, dank cistern pits of Judea can appreciate the purpose of inflicting death by slow misery. Fortunately a eunuch of the palace protested to the weak and changing king and got permission to take three men and let down old rags and garments for Jeremiah to put under his armpits and so to be drawn up with cords to a less deadly imprisonment.

Buying land as mark of faith. Again the king sent for the prophet and again Jeremiah advised that the only hope for life was to surrender. As the siege wore on and Jeremiah was still shut up in the court of the guard, his cousin came to ask him as the nearest relative to buy a piece of family land in Anathoth. Jeremiah recognized in the occasion an opportunity from God to show that he really believed Judah would be restored after the exile. So he bought the land, weighed out the silver, signed the deed before witnesses, and had Baruch put the document in an earthen vessel where it would be safe for many years. Jeremiah, who had been steadily predicting destruction for

Jerusalem and long exile, thus gave a very practical demonstration of his faith that houses and fields and vineyards should yet again be bought in the land.

The new covenant. The prophet realized that the return and rebuilding which he anticipated for a later generation, would not be worth while unless the children who were to come back were a very different sort from the fathers who had brought ruin on the land. When he was still a young man, he had seen the nation renew the covenant with God to be true to his commands. Then he had seen them break their contract, after the death of Josiah when Jehoiakim ruled and scorned all laws of God. In the stress of siege under Zedekiah, he had seen them make a brief attempt to carry out the law of the slaves and then break the law, just as soon as the danger was relieved. With them agreements were nothing, save as sore distress might force them.

Jeremiah showed great faith when he looked across the years of exile and acted on the assurance that houses and fields would yet again be bought and sold in Judea. He revealed a deeper faith and insight when, out of the darkness of broken covenants, he declared: "The days will come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers . . . which my covenant they brake. . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it. . . . . They shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them." He did not say that this would

come to pass in seventy years or seven times seventy years, but the God enlightened prophet knew that until the people had the teaching of God in their hearts and knew his true character, their life as a people would not be safe.

We shall see the people of Israel, after the return from exile, humbled by punishment, trying to learn and keep God's commands, but we must wait full six hundred years before one comes who makes men really understand what it means to have the law written in the heart and to know God. St. Paul tells us that when Jesus instituted the great sacrament (*sarcramentum,* oath of allegiance) he said, "This is the new covenant in my blood." Jesus made possible for men what Jeremiah saw in hope and faith when the old covenant had been broken once and again.

In the summer of 586 B. C., after a long siege, the Chaldeans breached the strong walls. Zedekiah, at the head of a few soldiers, fled, in the confusion, down the wilderness road toward Jericho, but he was captured and taken before Nebuchadrezzar. No mercy was shown, his sons were slain before his eyes, and, with that horrible picture the last impression on his vision, he was blinded and carried a prisoner to Babylon.

Last scenes of Jeremiah's life. When the Babylonians learned how Jeremiah had tried to dissuade king and people from rebellion, they gave him freedom to go to Babylon or remain with the remnant of his people left in Judea. He chose to stay, but he was not even now to know any peace. With Jerusalem

destroyed, Mizpah, five miles away, was made the seat of Gedaliah, the governor of the people left in the devastated land. Soon Gedaliah was assassinated by the leader of a marauding band, a prince of the royal family. In terror, the Mizpah company fled to Egypt, against Jeremiah's advice, but taking him with them.

In the land of the Nile, the prophet warned his countrymen that they were not yet safe, for Egypt would be conquered. There they practiced idolatry and were deaf to his warnings. Our last glimpse of Jeremiah shows him pronouncing doom upon the idolaters, yet not without a glimpse of hope. A few, very few, he is sure will escape from Egypt to their own land.

Thus the curtain falls on one of the most tragic stories in history. The night of exile has come. A remnant of the Jews are in Egypt, faithless to their God. In Judea, desolate and devastated, anarchy rules among the poor and ignorant elements left in the land. The hope of the future rests largely with the fifty thousand who are exiles in far Babylonia, yet few of them can see the hope. It needs a prophet's vision and faith to look through the long, dark night to the dawn. Jeremiah had this vision and faith and so his tragic story is a story of hope.

Important Biblical references: II Kings 24: 18–25: 26; Jeremiah 24; 29; 23: 23–32; 27; 28; 51: 59; 21; 34: 6–22; Exodus 21: 2; Deuteronomy 15: 12; Jeremiah 37: 11–38: 28; 32: 1–15; 31: 31–34; 39–44.

CHAPTER VII

EZEKIEL AND HIS EARLY MESSAGE IN BABYLON

Ezekiel taken to Babylon. We must now turn back in thought from 586 to 597 B. C. and go with the first exiles to Babylon. Among the ten thousand men of standing, who with their families were carried away, was a young priest, by name Ezekiel. He was one of the company who were allowed to settle on the bank of the river Chebar. Very probably the young Jewish priest was able to go into the city of Nippur and saw there the great temple of the god Enlil. This ancient deity had been honored there more than two thousand years before Ezekiel's day. Here, or elsewhere in Babylonia, the young priest must have seen the strange images which the Babylonians loved to carve for the entrances of their temples and palaces. These were often composite creatures made up, it might be, of a bull's body, a bird's wings, and a man's head. Sometimes they were even stranger products of the imagination; such were the *sirushes* [1] that Nebuchadrezzar had carved on the gate of the great street for religious processions in Babylon. Perhaps Ezekiel visited the capital city itself and saw there the wonders that were being created in his time by the great king.

During the first five years of his captivity, the young

[1] See plate facing page 88.

priest was thinking deeply upon the coming fate of Jerusalem and the exile of himself and his companions. Most of the people had no idea that their national god, Jehovah, was here in Babylonia, as near to them as in Jerusalem. Of God as a universal spirit they had no conception. They still had the primitive thought of deities as limited to particular countries and places, at best able to go into foreign countries only like kings with the victorious armies of their peoples. Ezekiel was familiar with the higher conception of God which had been revealed through the great prophets of Israel, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and was thus prepared for a strange and wonderful vision of Jehovah in far off Babylonia.

Vision of God in Babylon. Approaching from the north, the direction whence the weary, footsore captives had come five years before, he saw a great thunder cloud flashing with lightning. From the days when Jehovah revealed himself to Moses on the cloud capped summit of Sinai onward, the sudden, terrifying thunder clouds of Palestine had ever been to Hebrew poet and prophet the chariot of the Lord. Now the priest in Babylonia has had his imagination filled with the strange imagery of that land and its religion, in addition to the majestic symbols of nature familiar in his own religious literature. As the flame-lighted cloud draws nearer he begins to discern the likeness of living creatures in the onrolling, flashing cloud mass. Each has four faces, and four wings, and hoofs that sparkle as burnished brass; yes, and under the wings there are hands like those of men. The spread wings of each

touch those of the others and all four creatures keep in perfect position.

The front faces are all those of men, but, were you to view the fast moving group from the right side, four lions' faces would be toward you; from the left, they would be those of oxen, and from the rear, of eagles. All is brilliant as burning coals from the swift moving fire of lightning. On the earth beside each living creature is a strange, great wheel, a wheel with another set within it, at right angles, so that each could roll forward, backward, to the right, or left without being turned to one side. The wheels seemed to be made of transparent beryl, and they were living, too, for the rim of each was dreadful, full of eyes looking out in all directions. The wheels ran now upon the earth and now they rose with the winged living creatures, for the spirit of life was in the wheels.

Above the heads of the living creatures, there was a crystal dome like that of the sky, and above this a throne as it were of beautiful blue sapphire. On the throne sat a human figure of glowing fire and like a rainbow was the brightness round about it. This was the appearance of the likeness of Jehovah. When Ezekiel saw, he fell upon his face and heard a voice. The voice addressed the young priest, commissioning him as a prophet to speak to his countrymen in exile. An outstretched hand seemed to give him a book to eat, written with lamenations and mourning and woe; yet its taste was sweet as honey, for this was the word of God and it was to become, like food, the very life of the prophet.

This inaugural vision which came to Ezekiel in the summer of 592 B. C. showed him the God of Israel not limited to Jerusalem and little Palestine, but able to follow his distressed people to their distant land of captivity and there to commission a prophet to speak for him, just as truly as he had commissioned Isaiah by his temple altar in Jerusalem.

Comparison of Isaiah's inaugural vision. It is interesting to compare the two visions of Jehovah (Isa. 6 and Ezek. 1) in which God's exaltation, majesty, and splendor are so impressively pictured. Isaiah, like Ezekiel, saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up. Above him were shining, winged beings, singing "Holy, holy, holy." As they praised him whose glory filled the earth, the foundations of the temple shook and the house itself was full of smoke. At the vision of the Divine splendor and exaltation in holiness, Isaiah was overcome, first with a sense of his own uncleanness and then the uncleanness of the people. When the burning coal from the altar had touched his lips, he was ready to answer the call, "Whom shall I send?" and was given his prophet's message of judgment and hope.

Ezekiel, we have seen, had moved among the great, symbolic images associated with Babylonian mythology and religion. These spoke to the people of the guardianship of deities who had given wisdom and power to the rulers of Babylon centuries before. Ezekiel saw such mysterious beings rather as the throne bearers of Isaiah's exalted God whose glory did indeed fill the earth. He could sit upon his sapphire throne

surrounded with the lightning's splendor and, with turning wheel or rushing wing, be borne to Babylon by creatures more terrible than those which commanded the fear and reverence of the conquering Chaldeans.

Isaiah's unclean lips were purged by the fire from the altar and made fit instruments for proclaiming God's message. Ezekiel, hundreds of miles away from that symbolic fire, received the words in the form of a book. Both found the message one of woe, to be pronounced upon a people deaf to the guiding word of God. Isaiah had to receive assurance of the burning away of his own sin before he was ready for his commission. To Ezekiel there came with the commission a great and terrible sense of responsibility.

Comparison of Jeremiah's inaugural vision. Ezekiel's inaugural vision had some elements too in common with that of Jeremiah. We remember that this prophet felt himself a mere child, unable to speak until the Divine hand touched his mouth and put words within it. Then there came to him the vision of evil, breaking forth out of the north like a boiling caldron, the foreglimpse of Jerusalem's siege, and there came also the repeated exhortation not to be discouraged for Jehovah had made the shrinking youth strong as iron pillar and brazen walls.

Jeremiah's vision did not have all the splendid imagery and majesty of the other two, but the essential message that led each great prophet to undertake his life work had much in common. Since the people are ever hostile to new and higher truth, they

have to be taught by suffering and the prophet begins with a word of woe.

The message is one, and yet it varies with the times and with the temperament of each messenger. Isaiah who is to be a great teacher of righteousness feels first his own sin; when this is forgiven, eager, he hears the call and answers "Here am I; send me." He is the most glorious of the three. Jeremiah, timid, sensitive, feels his own weakness, and yet realizes that God has work for him to do, for which he was appointed before his very birth. With this comes the assurance that God's strength is made perfect in weakness. His life is not so splendid in the eyes of men, but he comes to deeper and more significant truth than Isaiah.

The prophet a watchman. Ezekiel is not a glorious young poet and leader like Isaiah nor a man capable of such deep experiences as Jeremiah. He receives his message, goes in the bitterness and heat of his spirit to the captives at Tel-abib by the River Chebar, and then for seven days sits overwhelmed among them. His sense of terrible responsibility comes to him in a homely comparison with the watchman set upon the wall of a city to warn of approaching enemies. If he cries the warning, the people are responsible to defend themselves; if he fails, their blood is on his head. Yet the new-made prophet seems not quite ready to give his message. He turns away from the river to the glory of the great unending plain of Babylonia and lo, there is the glory of Jehovah like that which he saw by the river Chebar. This

time he learns that he may not always cry his message to the people who are rebellious against Jehovah. At times, the Lord will make him silent among them and, at times, he shall speak.

The danger of the time. Ezekiel's times of silence become almost more impressive than his speech. He learns to arouse curiosity and interest through the eye, when he cannot get a hearing. He tries all sorts of queer ways to drive home the lesson that the captives must needs learn if they are to be at all prepared for the coming destruction of Jerusalem. When Nineveh fell the Assyrian god, Asshur, ceased to be respected and feared in the world. The Assyrian kings had ascribed their cruel conquests to the favor of this god and when victory came to their enemies, his worship soon perished from the earth. What would happen to the fear and worship of Jehovah when his city should be destroyed, his temple in ruins, and the nation that had trusted him for defense, scattered?

The prophecy of the tile. The prophet Ezekiel knew that the exiles in Babylon, whose faith in Jehovah now centered in belief that he would soon restore them to their land, were in danger of ceasing altogether to fear or trust him when Jerusalem should fall. They might not heed words of warning, but their curiosity compelled them to watch when the prophet took a tile, laid it on the ground and began to draw a picture on it. Probably it was one of the large, soft, unbaked bricks on which the Babylonians wrote with a blunt stylus. As they watched, they saw that he was not trying to make the little wedge-shaped marks with

which the Babylonian scribes formed their words, nor yet the lines that shaped Hebrew letters. He was picturing a city; yes, it was Jerusalem, which they had last seen more than five years before, as they looked back from one of the hilltops for a final glimpse of the loved spot, the day that the herded captives started their long journey. Round about he is drawing forts, and a besiegers' mound, and camps, and battering rams. Now he sets up an iron plate as a wall between himself and the beleaguered city, and thus protected from all defenders he lays siege against it.

The prophet has not spoken a word, but the people, despite themselves, have understood his sermon and cannot forget it. They may try to comfort themselves with the superstitious faith that Jehovah will not permit his temple to be captured, but they cannot get rid of that picture that keeps rising before them, Jerusalem hopelessly besieged.

Various symbolic acts. During these opening days of his ministry, Ezekiel adopted such devices for teaching the needed truth that Jerusalem was to be destroyed in accordance with Jehovah's will, and that the captivity was to be prolonged. At one time, lying on his side for days, he indicated a period of forty years for Judah's captivity. Again, shaving his head and beard with a sharp sword, he weighed the hair in three parts. One third he burned in the fire, one he smote with the sword, and the last he scattered to the wind. Just a few hairs he bound up in his garment; of these he took out some and threw them too into the fire. As the people watched these strange acts, Ezekiel found

opportunity to preach of the sin of Jerusalem and of the coming judgment, when a third of the people should die by pestilence and famine, another third by the sword, and another should be scattered to the winds, pursued by the sword. Only a small and diminished remnant would be spared.

Important Biblical references: Ezekiel 1:1–3:15; Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1; Ezekiel 3:16–5:17.

CHAPTER VIII

EZEKIEL AND THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

Danger in misunderstanding Jerusalem's fall. During the four years from his inaugural vision in 592 until the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem in 588, Ezekiel was occupied with the task of trying to convince the exiles that Jerusalem must fall. The need for driving home this lesson was acute. If the Babylonian exiles, the hope for the future of Israel, were unprepared for this blow, Jehovah would be forgotten and his religion of righteousness and mercy would perish from the world with the downfall of the nation. With the fall of Nineveh and the end of the Assyrian Empire, the worship of the dreaded god Asshur was, as we noted in the last chapter, doomed to oblivion. What was to prevent such an inglorious end for the worship of Jehovah?

As we look back over the whole course of human history, we can see that the crisis which Ezekiel was called upon to meet was one of the most fateful that has ever arisen. Twelve hundred years before Ezekiel's time Egyptian prophets had seen and taught the rudiments of a religion of truth and social justice. Spiritual insight had advanced in that gifted people until at last a great king had tried to compel the worship of only one god and to enforce throughout his

empire a religion that inculcated the love of truth and mercy. But royal power cannot enforce truth. The monotheistic king had died, and the priests of other gods, with the willing support of the people, had revived the worship of many deities whose service did not lift man to right dealing, truth, and kindness. Egypt had touched the skirts of the one true God whose service is to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly. Then she had turned away and sunk down into a superstitious faith that debased man to the level of the animal.

Moses caught up the torch of truth that Egypt laid down. Handed on from prophet to prophet through six centuries of Israel's history, it had grown ever clearer in its shining until now, as the dark night of exile fell, the watchman must hold it high and true. Most of the people of Israel led by the greater number of their priests and prophets and kings had struggled against the advance of truth, just as the men of Egypt had done. Quick upon the death of the reforming king of Egypt, debasing religion came flooding back, and never again did his nation rise to a pure and elevating faith. With the death of Josiah, the reforming king of Judah, the tide of evil against which he had raised the dikes, rolled back. The temple was polluted with the worship of other gods. What faith the priests, prophets, and people had in Jehovah was only a superstitious belief that he must protect his own castle; it was not a faith resting in love and duty. When Jehovah's stronghold should fall, all trust in him would be at an end.

Ezekiel's great truth. It was the supreme task of Ezekiel to teach the flower of the nation in Babylonia, before the final blow fell, that Jerusalem's destruction was coming by Jehovah's own determination. The capture of the city would not mean that he could not defend his dwelling place, but that he was sending judgment upon his faithless people. Only as some of his hearers might learn this lesson could Israel's priceless heritage be preserved for the world.

Cost of the prophets' faith. The name of Asshur might be forgotten, but other people than the Assyrians would rise in far distant generations to honor a god thought to give victory to his favorites in wars of cruel conquest. If faith in the God of Israel's true prophets had been lost with the fall of his city and the scattering of his worshippers, we do not like to contemplate what the course of human history would have been. To build up the prophets' faith in a sole, all-ruling God whose essence is righteousness and love is a slow and costly process. It is possible only where for generation after generation, without ceasing, there are men gifted to know spiritual truth, who are willing to suffer and die that others may know the truth and live more truly.

Egypt had such a succession of men for a few centuries and then they ceased. Greece had men, a Socrates, an Æschylus, who saw and spoke the truth of life, but it was not hers to give the world the unremitting succession of torch bearers to pass on the flame until it should shine forth in the perfect light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world.

This was Israel's work to do and the time of Jerusalem's fall was one of the most critical moments of the twelve centuries from Moses to John the Baptist.

Pollution of the temple. In the second year of his ministry, Ezekiel was sitting in his own house with the elders of Judah before him when suddenly he found himself transported, in the visions of God, from far Babylonia to the temple in Jerusalem. There at the gate of the inner court, he saw an image provoking to jealousy, but there also was the glory of the God of Israel as he had seen it in the plain of Babylonia. The Divine voice spoke to him and indicated the abominations practiced in the very precincts of the temple. These were driving Jehovah from his house.

In an inner room the prophet saw reptiles, beasts, and idols portrayed upon the wall. Before these, the elders of Israel were burning incense. By the north gate, he saw women weeping for Tammuz. This was a favorite rite of the women of Babylonia, based upon the nature myth connected with the disappearance of vegetation and fruitfulness at the change of the year. More than all this, before the very door of the holy place of the temple, between the porch and the altar, five and twenty men stood with their backs toward the house of Jehovah, facing the east and worshipping the sun. It was a strange mixture of Hebrew, Egyptian, and Babylonian worship that had flooded the sacred precincts in the eighteen years since Josiah's death.

Jehovah leaves the city. Suddenly in the vision, Jehovah, whose glory had gone up from above the cherubim to the threshold of the house, called for the

heavenly guardians of the city to go through and slay all who were not grieved over the abominations. Then the glory of Jehovah went forth from the threshold and stood above the cherubim and the cherubim lifted up their wings and rose from the earth. They left the city and stood upon the Mount of Olives, above it to the east, but not until assurance had been spoken to Ezekiel that the faithful of the exile should at last be restored.

As one of priestly family, Ezekiel had been familiar with conditions at the temple before he was carried to Babylon. Reports, too, must have come to him of the present situation. We saw from Jeremiah's writings that communication between the Jews of Babylon and Jerusalem was not lacking. Ezekiel's purpose was to show to a people who thought of Jehovah as limited to one place that his temple was no longer the place of his abode. They thought after the manner of primitive people who had not grasped the spiritual ideas of the great prophets, and Ezekiel's teaching was adapted to their childlike notions. Perhaps they could get hold of the idea that the fall of Jerusalem would not be the defeat of Jehovah in his citadel, for he had voluntarily withdrawn from the polluted place.

Prophets of false hope. Ezekiel's difficulties were not only with the blindness of the mass of the people. We saw in connection with the work of Jeremiah that there were false prophets in Babylon. Ezekiel had to contend against these pernicious teachers. They were seeing visions of peace for Jerusalem when the true prophet's insight looked for destruction. They

were men who did not know the sure consequences of sin and folly, and rejoiced in a popularity gained by a cheap optimism. Women, too, there were who claimed prophetic vision and lulled the consciences of those whom Ezekiel would awaken to repentance. Still Ezekiel commanded a more respectful hearing than was sometimes accorded to the true prophets. Once and again we read of the elders coming and sitting before him; to them he speaks his weighty words of warning.

Warnings to the elders. At one time, he boldly accuses the elders of idolatry and goes on to warn them that the presence of a few righteous men in a community cannot stay the hand of judgment. Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were present, they could deliver only their own lives. Yet he declares that, though four, sore judgments are to come upon Jerusalem, sword, famine, beasts, and pestilence, a remnant shall be saved and added to the exiles in Babylon. At another time in the same year, when the elders came to inquire of Jehovah and sat before Ezekiel, he cried out that God would not be inquired of by them and went on to tell the long story of continual rejection of Jehovah from the time when he brought the people out of Egypt.

The story of the eagles. Besides his acted parables, symbolic visions, and direct warnings from history and present conduct, Ezekiel secured a hearing by telling a story such as eastern peoples love. He told them of a great eagle with wide-spreading wings that came to Lebanon and cropped off the top of a cedar, with the

uppermost, tender twigs, and set it in a city of merchants, and how this eagle took the seed of the land and planted it where it became a sturdy, low spreading vine. Then another great eagle came and the vine reached out to him that he might water it. The vine shall be pulled up and withered by the east wind, the story teller declares.

What does this queer story mean? The prophet will tell the listeners. The cedar top and twigs, plucked up and carried off to the merchant city, are the king and princes carried from Jerusalem to Babylon. The seed planted in the land to become a low speading vine is Zedekiah, the seed-royal left with the living but humbled kingdom. This new king has reached out to Egypt, the second great eagle, sending ambassadors and breaking his oath to the king of Babylon. Egypt will not be able to help in the war that the faithless king is bringing upon himself.

Futility of help from Egypt. From Babylonia, we see, Ezekiel was watching the movements and the intrigues of the nations, just as Jeremiah was doing from his central position in Jerusalem. Like Jeremiah, and Isaiah before them, Ezekiel saw that Judah, which had taken the oath of allegiance to the eastern power, must stand by it. He saw that Egypt, though she might tempt Judah to rebellion, could not offer effective help against the great kingdoms of the Tigris-Euphrates valley. Ezekiel worked as intensely as Isaiah had done in his earlier time, to convince his generation that Egypt was doomed to failure in her plans against the eastern power.

A year after the siege of Jerusalem had begun, Ezekiel declared that the Lord was against Pharaoh. He pictured this ruler as the Egyptian crocodile who should be drawn out of his river with a great hook in his jaws and be cast, with all the fish of his rivers, into the wilderness. Those who have been to Jehovah's people a staff of reed that broke when leaned upon, shall be made to know the Lord's power.

Some months later, the prophet declared that Jehovah would support the arms of the king of Babylon and bring destruction upon Egypt, scattering the people among the nations. Two months later, he addressed Pharaoh as though actually before him, warning the Egyptian by the crashing fall of Assyria what his own fate would be. Again, he sang a succession of dirges over the Egyptian king. One of these is a weird song picturing the Egyptians welcomed to the abode of the dead by the nations that have already gone down to the pit.

Ezekiel and the beginning of the siege. In following the story of Ezekiel's warnings to the Babylonian exiles concerning help from Egypt, we have been led down through the years of the long siege (588–586) which resulted in the complete destruction of Jerusalem. At the time when the siege began, the prophet had spoken to the exiles in a parable, picturing a great caldron set upon a huge fire with choice flesh thrown in to boil for a time and then to be taken out as rejected. Crying, "Woe to the bloody city," he urged to heap on the wood, make the fire hot till the very bones were burned; then the emptied pot itself should

be burned and the filthiness of it melted in the brass.

In strange contrast to this frantic picture of Jerusalem's siege and destruction, is the prophet's announcement in the morning that his beloved wife is to die. At evening she dies and, the next day, the bereaved husband neither weeps nor mourns. He is clothed as usual, no tears escape his eyes, and even his sighs are stifled. In the Orient where grief for the dead is expressed in loud lamentation, beating of the breast, and stripping off the clothing, such conduct would seem as strange as for a man in high position among us to go to a banquet on the evening of his wife's burial day. What could it mean? Was the prophet mad? The people say to him, "Wilt thou not tell us what these things are, that thou doest so?" He explained that their loved sanctuary was to be profaned, and their sons and daughters whom they had left behind in Jerusalem killed. Then they will do as he has done; without the relief of weeping and lamenting, they will pine away in their grief.

Important Biblical references: Ezekiel 8–10; 14; 20: 1–44; 17; 29: 1–16; 32; 24.

CHAPTER IX

EZEKIEL AND THE FUTURE

Turning point in Ezekiel's ministry. The fall of Jerusalem in 586 B. C. marks the great division point in Ezekiel's life work. For six years he had preached the certain destruction of the city. Isaiah had interpreted Assyria as the rod of smiting in Jehovah's hand; so Ezekiel saw Babylon as the Lord's scourge. When the scourge fell there seems to have come to Ezekiel a great sense of personal responsibility, like that which marked the opening of his ministry.

He is now, perhaps, thirty-six years old. For two years, his beloved wife has been dead. His grief for her has been tempered, it may be, by the reflection that she was spared the anxiety and sorrow of the two years of siege. They were years in which the exiles in Babylon were torn between hope and fear for the loved ones left behind in Jerusalem and for the fate of the city and its sanctuary, in which their faith and hope of return had centered. Ezekiel himself, in tearless mourning, had remained a symbol of the stupefying grief he had foreseen for all.

The faithless shepherds. With the city's capture and destruction, the occasion teaches new duties. The watchman must forget his own sorrow. Alive to the new and different danger, he must prepare his people

against it. The hand of Jehovah is upon him in the evening, and in the morning the messenger comes with the news of Jerusalem's fall. Just at first he applies the old truth; the desolation of the land is unavoidable, in order that the people may know that Jehovah is. Then, in hot indignation, he cries out against the rulers of Israel, shepherds who have cared for themselves, but not for the sheep of the flock. With his strong feeling of his own responsibility, he had a profound sense of the responsibility of the kings and rulers, whose care it should have been to provide for the people in their helplessness.

God's purpose life. Now there come the new notes in Ezekiel's teaching. The people who had trusted the temple are in despair. They cry out, "Our transgressions and our sins are upon us; how then can we live?" Ezekiel's answer is that the Lord does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked. His purpose is that they may turn from their evil way and live. When all others are in despair, the prophet's message becomes one of hope.

Hope for individual. The Divine shepherd. A new truth, of which Jeremiah had caught a glimpse as he faced national ruin, is now set forth more fully by Ezekiel. It is the blessed truth that each individual stands before Jehovah on his own account, judged by his present life. If he turns from his wickedness and does that which is right, he shall live thereby. He goes on to promise that the Lord Jehovah will take the place of the faithless shepherds. He will seek out the sheep and deliver them from all places whither

they have been scattered in the dark day. He will bring them into their own land and feed them by the water courses. The prophet pictures how the strong sheep have in the past eaten the best pasture and have trodden down what they could not eat; how they have drunk the clear water, have fouled the rest with their feet, and shouldered away the weak. When the Lord has judged between sheep and sheep, he will set up his servant David as one shepherd over them. He will be their God, and David his prince among them.

The popular hope and the prophets' hope. In these dark days, when the exiles feel that they cannot live because their transgressions have overtaken them, Ezekiel rises above the present grief and gives some of the most beautiful glimpses of New Testament truth and hope. Even before the complete exile, Jeremiah and Ezekiel had looked beyond the decades in Babylon to restoration. In doing so they had found it necessary to emphasize the length of the exile, in contrast to the people's hope of speedy return. Now those same people had lost all hope of return. The prophet must try to lift them out of their faithless despair. It is the lot of the prophet, who sees beneath the surface of things and looks beyond the immediate present, to declare judgment when others are full of hope and to picture hope when the foolish supports of their optimism have been destroyed.

A popular preacher. Now that he can talk of brighter days to come, Ezekiel finds himself a popular preacher. The people come in numbers to hear him. They enjoy his discourse, just as they enjoy good music,

but what he says, they are not willing to do, for they are wrapped up in their own affairs. Ezekiel again resorts to vision prophecy that arouses the curiosity of his hearers. So he gets his message at least into their heads, though it is more difficult to secure a real response from their hearts and wills.

The valley of bones. One vision was that of a valley, all full of dry bones. Ezekiel walked about among the bones and was then bidden to prophesy that Jehovah would lay sinews upon them, cover them with flesh and skin, and put breath in them. As in the vision he uttered this promise, there came an earthquake, and the bones came together, bone to its bone, and there were sinews upon them, and flesh came up, and skin covered them. Yet they lay lifeless upon the ground until in the name of the Lord he directed the four winds to come. Then breath came, and they lived and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army. The bones were the whole house of Israel, now dead in exile. God will put his spirit in them and they shall live and be restored to their land.

The two sticks. The singular vision was followed by one of Ezekiel's acted prophecies. He put together two sticks on which he had written words concerning Judah and Joseph. When the people asked the meaning, they learned that this was another prophecy of restoration and of the reunion of all Israel and Judah under one king. All would dwell together in the old land with the sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore. Jehovah dwelling with them would be their God and they his people.

Origin of apocalypse. At another time the prophet painted, in lurid colors, a most astonishing word picture. This is especially worth noticing, for it is the first example of a kind of writing that later became the most popular type of literature among the Jews and was inherited from them by the early Christians. The best known examples of this form of writing are the book of Daniel in the Old Testament and the book of Revelation which stands at the end of the New Testament.

The name given to this type of writing was the Greek word Apocalypse, uncovering, translated into Latin-English by Revelation, unveiling. As the name indicates, these writings sought to unveil the face of the future. They were written in dark times of persecution and described the trials of Jehovah's people in strange symbols. Their central thought was that the Lord would appear and destroy the persecutors just when their complete triumph over his people seemed most certain. This would force the world to recognize him as God.

In Ezekiel's time, when the city and temple were in ruins and the people scattered, enemies were wont to utter the taunting cry, "Where is now thy god?" Ezekiel pictures a day when none shall make this sarcastic query. He sees in distant vision, after Israel has been restored to her land, peoples from the far north in the Armenian mountains sweeping down in great hordes, an invasion more terrible than that of the wild Scythians who came from the same direction. Just when all seems lost, Jehovah smites the

weapons out of the invaders' hands and strikes the forces down in the open field, there to be a prey for the ravenous birds and beasts. Their shields, bows, arrows, handstaves, and spears, left upon the field, will supply the cities of Israel with all needed firewood for seven years. Thus the nations will know that the Lord is Jehovah, the Holy One in Israel. They will know, too, that he let his people be carried into captivity because of their sins.

The apocalyptic and the prophetic idea of God. The idea of God's glory presented in this first apocalypse falls far below that which had been developed by the great prophets in their successive visions of the Divine nature. It is true that they had seen him as King of kings, God of the nations carrying out his righteous purposes through men's selfish struggles, but they had laid chief stress upon his justice, love, and moral holiness. In Ezekiel's time Jehovah is despised among the nations as too weak to protect his own abode. Nothing but a spectacular display of physical power, the prophet feels, can lead the nations to recognize the God of Israel.

As weakness and cruel oppression continued to be the people's lot for centuries after Ezekiel's time, they comforted themselves more and more with visions of the great day of deliverance when God should at last sweep away all their enemies from the earth. Dominated by such hopes, the Jews could not recognize as Son of God one who expressed in word and deed God's moral character and power rather than destructive physical force.

Tyre and Egypt. Ezekiel continued to deliver his message of hope for sixteen years after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B. C. He had the keenest interest in all the international affairs of the period. Nebuchadrezzar's thirteen year siege of the island city of Tyre especially occupied his attention. He rightly foresaw that the city must yield at last, however long it might hold out. So he composed an elaborate elegy over the city as though it had already fallen. The symbol of the ship of state has never been applied more appropriately, in all the centuries since, than to Tyre that lay out in the sea. For Tyre it was not "Sail on, O ship," but the wreck of the ship that had called herself "perfect in beauty."

Tyre, thou saidst: A ship am I; perfect in beauty.
In the heart of the sea is thy bound; thy builders perfected thy beauty.
Of cypress from Hermon they made for thee all thy planks.
A cedar from Lebanon they took, a mast to form.
Of lofty oaks from Bashan, they fashioned thy oars;
Thy deck, of ivory with boxwood from the Cyprian isles.
Fine linen with broidery from Egypt was thy canvas.
Violet and purple from the coasts of Greece, were thy hangings.
The men of Sidon and Arvad, were thy oarsmen.
Thy own skillful ones, Tyre, were in thee; they were thy pilots.

. . . . . .

Unto the high seas they brought thee, those rowing thee.
The east wind shattered thee, in the heart of the waters.

In the description of the fitting and the manning of the ship, Ezekiel exhibits remarkably wide information concerning the world's commerce. Rudyard Kipling

himself shows hardly more exact and minute knowledge in his stories than this prophet among the exiles of ancient Israel.

The last dated word of Ezekiel comes from the time when the long and arduous siege of Tyre was finished. The besiegers had grown bald and their shoulders were worn by the weary years of service. The prophet felt that the capture of Tyre was no reward for the great labor and promised the conquest of Egypt as a recompense to Nebuchadrezzar. The necessity of first capturing the Phœnician strongholds had delayed the Babylonians long in their progress to western conquest. Ezekiel may have felt that Egypt's long immunity from attack might lead the Jews once more to entertain futile hopes from that quarter. At any rate, his last dated word, 570 B. C., was one of doom upon Egypt and continued power for Babylon.

Two years earlier, Ezekiel had been occupied with an elaborate vision of restored Jerusalem. He had seen the temple rebuilt, surrounded by courts and gates, with chambers for priests and singers, the whole far surpassing the appurtenances of Solomon's temple. Standing at the new eastern gate, he had beheld the glory of the God of Israel returning with all the splendid panoply he had seen at first by the river Chebar. The prophet had received instructions, too, for the new altar and its consecration, and for elaborate ordinances of priests and Levites, by which the sanctity of the house was to be maintained in the future. These instructions provided for a more elaborate priestly organization than had ever been known before the exile,

and they became one basis of a great revision of Israel's temple worship that was finally established in Ezra's time, more than a century later.

In originating the apocalyptic form of faith and in developing the priestly worship, Ezekiel exercised a profound influence on the future, partly beneficial and partly the source of great evils, when his ideas were carried to an extreme by later generations which forgot his moral teaching. In keeping his own and future generations from despair in darkest hour, he played a great part in preserving the people and their religion until the fullness of time should come. Taken all in all, it is probably true that no man in Israel's history after Moses exercised a more immediate and lasting influence on the people than the priest-prophet Ezekiel.

Important Biblical references: Ezekiel 33:21–29; 34:1–10; 33:10–20; 34:11–31; 33:30–33; 37; 38–39; 27 (for the translation quoted in the text see, "History Literature of Ancient Israel," pp. 244–245); 29:17–20.

EVANGELICAL
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

CHAPTER X

THE GREAT UNKNOWN

About twenty-five years after Ezekiel had added the last word to his prophecies, one of the greatest of Israel's great prophets began to sing wonderful songs of hope and inspiration to the dejected exiles in Babylon.

Babylonia twenty-five years after Ezekiel. We have no glimpses of the exiles during these intervening years. It was now fifty years since the great company with which Ezekiel came was torn from its native hills, to be settled on the hot and hopeless plain of Babylon. Ezekiel and most of his generation had passed away. The great conqueror Nebuchadrezzar had died. Two asassinations and usurpations, within six years after his death, had indicated the unstable character of the rule which Nebuchadrezzar had consolidated. The usurper Nabonidus now sat upon the throne. The God of Israel was still counted unable to care for his chosen people, while the ancient gods of Babylonia were worshipped with more pomp and circumstance than ever.

The reigning king was especially interested in restoring ancient temples and worship. With impressive display, the images were carried up the splendid procession street leading to the temple of Marduk. The

sides of this street were lined with walls covered with glazed tiles, representing tawny lions on a rich background of dark blue. At the great Ishtar gate leading to the temple, the decoration changed to alternating rows of bulls and dragons (*sirushes*). Marduk had given world power to his city eight hundred years before Moses led the enslaved tribes out of Egypt to covenant with Jehovah at Sinai. Now the city of his ancient care had for two generations, been enjoying its greatest wealth and power.

Nabonidus was not satisfied with worshipping merely the city deity of Babylon. He was busily engaged in excavating the sites of ancient temples and in bringing the images of deities of still more ancient fame than Marduk into the great capital city which Nebuchadrezzar had brought to such splendor. It is not to be wondered at that many of the Jews in Babylon had come to the conclusion that their God could never deliver them from the power of these deities. It is not strange either that most of the younger generation who knew nothing of the old Judean home, except as a tradition of their elders, felt no great longing to leave the busy life in which they had grown up, and to go to the long devastated mountains of Palestine.

A new voice. Suddenly, at the end of the half century of exile, there is heard the voice of a great singer. He calls himself simply a "voice" and we call him "the great unknown." We know neither his name, nor his father's name, nor the facts of his personal history. Like the man with the iron mask, his identity is a mystery, but his spirit and his voice are the noblest

and the sweetest that we may hear calling across the centuries from the distant past.

> Nahamú, nahamú, ammí
> Dabberú, 'al-lêbh Yerushaláyim
> Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,
> Speak unto the heart of Jerusalem,

he sings and suddenly there seems a chorus of voices. One cries,

> Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah;
> Make level in the desert a highway for our God.

Another cries,

> All flesh is grass,
> And all its glory as the flower of the field.
> Grass withers, flower fades;
> But the word of our God shall stand forever.

Another brings good tidings to Jerusalem that Jehovah will shepherd his flock there.

Now the song rises to great heights and we have unfolded before us the sovereignty and omnipotence of the God of Israel who measured the seas, the heavens, and the earth in his hand; before whom all the nations are nothing. In scorn the singer contrasts the gods whose likenesses are fashioned by the workman with him who sitteth above the circle of the earth, who bringeth out all the stars. Then he turns to the discouraged people who feel that their God is indifferent to them, to assure them that the creator of the ends of the earth giveth power to the faint; that they

who wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength and mount as with eagle's wings.

The deliverer. As the song continues, we catch a glimpse of the one in whose opening career the prophet sees the coming deliverer for his fellow exiles. It is Cyrus, king of Persia, who, in the year 549 B. C., united to his little kingdom east of Babylon the hordes of the Medes, old allies of Nebuchadrezzar and his father Nabopolasser. Cyrus is the one from the east whom God calls and before whom he makes the nations as dust and driven stubble. He is the shepherd who shall perform all God's pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, "She shall be built." Him has Jehovah anointed to subdue nations before him.

Cyrus's rapid rise. Rarely if ever in human history has the ruler of a tiny kingdom become the head of a great empire in so short a time as Cyrus. The ten years from 550 to 540 B. C. saw him unite the Median empire to his own kingdom and then, with the united armies, conquer Asia Minor to the Ægean Sea, both the Lydian kingdom of Crœsus and the free Ionian cities of the coast. In the midst of this fateful decade, a Persian army seems to have made an incursion into southern Babylonia and to have gained permanent foothold there.

It was during these years when the one from the east was thus making the ends of the earth tremble, that the voice of the unknown prophet was heard among the exiles of Babylonia. With full faith in Jehovah as God of nations, he saw in Cyrus the ap-

pointed deliverer, at a time when the gods of Babylon still seemed all powerful to the other exiles.

Attack upon Babylonian polytheism. It is quite probable that Cyrus was a follower of Zoroaster and, if so, he acknowledged only one supreme god, the god of heaven. Perhaps the unnamed Hebrew prophet knew of this and counted Cyrus as really an adherent of the one true God whom Israel had long worshipped, although Cyrus knew him under another name, Ahma Mazdah. The time was favorable for showing the folly of polytheism with its imaged deities, and the Hebrew prophet cast most scathing ridicule upon the Babylonian idols. He pictured the carpenter cutting down a tree, using part of the wood to warm himself, part to cook his dinner, and out of what was left making a graven image. He had watched the Babylonian sacred processions in which the images of the deities were carried on the backs of cattle or the shoulders of men. He sarcastically contrasted their helplessness with the God of Israel who had carried his people from their childhood when he brought them out of Egypt. In this land of star-gazers, he constantly refers to the God who had created the heavens and stretched them forth. The one who made heaven and earth also fashioned Israel his servant, and he will redeem; he has blotted out their transgressions.

Coming fall of Babylon. In another song, he pictures Babylon as a delicately nurtured, royal lady, who must leave her throne and sit on the ground like any

poor woman of the East, turning the millstone to grind the family flour or, stripped of her royal apparel, must flee through the turbulent river, trying to escape her enemies. Queen Babylonia had been permitted to lord it over Jehovah's people because of their sins. In her proud arrogance, she had shown no mercy, and now sudden desolation was to come upon her.

God's power and purpose. With such stirring oracles the prophet sought to rouse his fellow exiles to the approaching fall of Babylon and to prepare them to interpret it as the righteous act of their fathers' God. He goes on to give even clearer assurance of God's power and purpose to restore his people and breaks forth into exulting songs of coming restoration. As once God pierced that great monster Egypt and dried up the Red Sea before Israel, so now the ransomed of Jehovah shall come joyously to Jerusalem's mountain. The poet knows that the people are all too poorly prepared for a real return and upbuilding of the true Jerusalem as a city of righteousness, and he urges them to seek Jehovah by reforming their conduct.

The servant. Running through these songs as a thread of gold, there is a series of passages concerning Jehovah's servant. At first the servant is Israel, then it is the loyal portion of Israel, that is to save the nation and, beyond this, is to be a light to the gentiles. Next the servant seems to be an individual, one whose visage is marred and who is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. It was the griefs and sorrows of others that he bore; by

his stripes they are healed. His soul suffers pain, but is satisfied when he makes many righteous.

What can it all mean? It is a picturing of one of the greatest truths of human life. It is a picture of the experience of the prophets of Israel. They were servants of God. They were despised and rejected, sometimes slain. Through their stripes Israel was healed. Without them her life would have been only that of a little group of tribes, much like many another. Jeremiah in particular, he who suffered such tortures for his faith and sorrowed so for the blindness of his people, might have been the original for this great portrait of the suffering servant. When the nation went into exile, those who were loyal to their God found it very hard to hear their enemies' taunt, "Where is now thy God?" Those who were loyal patriots sat and wept by the rivers of Babylon. The disloyal and careless part of the nation soon settled down there and ceased to think much of their God or their land. The loyal portion of the people was the servant through whom Jacob was saved and Israel's light shone out for the gentiles.

Out of the night of exile came these songs of the suffering servant and then the voice of the singer was stilled. No one of Israel's later writers saw that this was the road of salvation; they dreamed instead, as Ezekiel had done, of a time when the nation's enemies should meet bloody death; and Jerusalem should be the center of a great earthly power.

Five hundred years passed by and then there was one born at Bethlehem who knew that, only as he went

up to Jerusalem and there suffered many things and was rejected and put to death, could he bring salvation to men. In him the truth which the poet had seen in such fleeting, baffling pictures was complete. The cross which had been the symbol of punishment became for all ages the symbol of hope.

The truth is perfectly fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ, but it may be seen in part in all who have been willing to suffer for others. The pages of history are written over with the truth that men who have greatly advanced civilization have been despised and rejected of men, men of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Such have been the great thinkers and scientists. They have been persecuted by men who did not want new truth. Cross bearers, too, have been the myriads who have faced death willingly to overthrow despots and make men free.

One voice or several. The unnamed prophet who wrote the songs of the servant in the sixth century before Christ was one of the greatest poets and seers of all ages and all races. Whether he was the same as the sweet singer of the songs of comfort and hope or whether there was really more than one voice in the songs that make up chapters 40 to 55 of our book of Isaiah we cannot say. Perhaps there was a little group of poet prophets among the exiles during the years when Cyrus was preparing Babylon's downfall.

Chapters 56–66. Chapters 56 to 66 of the book of Isaiah were probably written after the fall of Babylon and may well have been composed by a different hand or hands from chapters 40 to 55. One of the most

beautiful passages from this latter section of the book, and indeed from the entire Old Testament, was that read by Jesus when he visited his boyhood home and spoke in the Nazareth synagogue among his old neighbors.

Jesus and Isaiah 40–66. It is clear from the Gospel story that the entire collection of oracles which was appended to the earlier book of Isaiah, that closed at Chapter 39, was ever present in the thought of Jesus the Christ. They must have been read over and over and deeply pondered by him in his youth among the Galilean hills. Such a vision as that at the beginning of Chapter 60 must have made the heart of the youthful Jesus beat high:

> Arise, shine; for thy light is come,
> And the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee.
> For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth,
> And gross darkness the peoples;
> But Jehovah will arise upon thee,
> And his glory shall be seen upon thee.
> And nations shall come to thy light,
> And kings to the brightness of thy rising.

Darkness, gross darkness rested upon the earth when that oracle was written, and, in Jesus' time, darkness had settled black. He was to bring the message that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

Important Biblical references: Isaiah 40; 44:24–45:7; 44:1–23; 46; 42:5–9; 47; 51:9–16; 56:6–13; 42:1–9, 49:1–13; 50:4–11, 52:13–53:12; 61:1–3, Luke 4:16–22.

CHAPTER XI

HAGGAI, A PRACTICAL MAN

Policy of Cyrus. Babylon, already outflanked by the conquests of Cyrus, surrendered, almost without a struggle, in the year 538 B. C. In many respects the conqueror fulfilled the hopes of the Great Unknown. Instead of the Assyrian policy of deportation and forcible intermingling to destroy the national life of conquered peoples, he permitted separate nationalities to retain their own customs. If they had been deported and their places of worship destroyed, he allowed them to return to their own lands and rebuild the sanctuaries of their own gods. Well did the unnamed prophet style such an one Jehovah's anointed. Few men in all the world's history have taken such an advance step in bringing in the kingdom of God on earth. In later centuries Rome followed a somewhat similar policy, but, when the Roman emperors demanded that subject peoples should add emperor worship to their national religions, they took a step backward from the larger vision of Cyrus the Persian.

Opportunity to return. Lack of desire. With the fall of Babylon then, the opportunity was open for the Jewish exiles to return and rebuild Jerusalem, but even the great songs of the Unknown and the earlier predictions of Jeremiah and Ezekiel had failed to enkindle the needed spirit in the greater part of the people.

The exiles of 597 had been eager to get back while the city stood and relatives and friends still called them, but nearly sixty years have passed since that first and greatest deportation to Babylon. Few are living of that company except those who were then very young and now even they are too old for nine hundred miles on foot, followed by the hard struggle of rebuilding Jerusalem and replanting the desolated fields and vineyards. The first children born in Babylon are elderly men and women. The young people of the usual age for migration and establishing homes in a distant region are the children of those born in Babylon. To them Judea is a tradition of the grandfather's home, way across the great desert. In the new empire, they enjoy similar rights with their Babylonian neighbors, also now a subject nationality. In Judea, they would not be independent; they would be a part of the same empire. Why return?

Opportunity in Babylon. Long before this they must have found a place in the industrial life of a region rich in agriculture and commerce. We have evidence that, at a somewhat later date, the Jews took prominent part in the business of that portion of the Persian empire. Business documents unearthed there in recent years show many Jewish names, just as a miscellaneous collection of business letters, accounts, contracts, and bills in an American city to-day would show the activities of the Jews in our business life. Babylonia under Persian rule offered free opportunity for this people to develop its dangerous instinct for financial affairs.

Return of small company. Free to move about the Persian empire and settle where they could find an opening, some traveled eastward. In the next century we find a Jew at the Persian capital as trusted officer of the emperor. Of him we shall read later. Some traveled westward. Soon there was a company of returned exiles back in the mountains of Judea. Historians are pretty generally agreed to-day that this band was not so large as used to be supposed, but it was important. At its head was Zerubbabel, grandson of Jehoiachin, the exile king of 597. In accordance with Cyrus's liberal policy, this prince of the house of David had been appointed local governor of Judea. With him was Joshua of the line of Aaron, recognized as chief priest. With these leaders no doubt there was quite a company, but it seems that the rebuilding of the houses of Jerusalem was chiefly done by the people of the land, who had been left behind of the exile or had earlier come back from Egypt, whither they or their fathers had fled in the days of destruction.

Altar rebuilt. Changes in Persian government. Before any real attempt was made to rebuild the temple, the altar was no doubt reconstructed on the ancient sacred rock where it had stood in the forecourt of Solomon's temple. It was some eighteen years after Cyrus's capture of Babylon before any effective attempt was made to rebuild the temple itself. During this time Cyrus had died, his son Cambyses had marched through Palestine to the conquest of Egypt, a usurper had arisen in Persia claiming to be the true heir to

the throne, Cambyses had killed himself on the way back from Egypt, the nobles had killed the usurper in Persia, and one of their number had been made emperor. The first years of this new ruler, Darius, were marked by revolts in many parts of the vast territories that Cyrus had subjugated.

Conditions in Jerusalem. The ruins of Jerusalem, high up on the mountain ridge away from the route of Cambyses and far from the centers of rebellion against Darius had been the scene of quiet activity, as the returned exiles and the people of the land reared again houses amid the fallen and overgrown débris.

It was in the second year of Darius's rule that one of the men in Judea named Haggai became deeply moved by the fact that the people were rebuilding their private houses but not the house of Jehovah. In the early fall, when the grain of the harvest was being threshed and the time for the old joyous feast of the ingathering of the grapes was approaching, Haggai addressed the people. The crops were small. Where they had looked for much grain their planting had produced little. When they threshed the grain that they had brought home, it proved to be mostly chaff, to be blown away by the wind of the threshing floor. The dews, counted upon to mature the precious grape crop during the long rainless summer, have been lacking. Through a great drought, grain, new wine, oil, and pasturage for the cattle have all suffered.

Haggai's interpretation. To Haggai, a simple, direct soul, all such experiences seemed the immediate judgment of God upon the people because they had

built themselves ceiled houses and had not undertaken in earnest the erection of Jehovah's house. He is a practical man who sees the thing that needs to be done next and goes to work in the most effective way to get it done. When the people are discouraged because of the poor quality of their grain crop and because their vines are filling out few and small clusters, he seizes the opportunity of the new moon festival in September to appeal to the Governor, the Chief Priest, and the people, declaring that their misfortunes are due to their failure to build Jehovah's house while providing ceiled houses for themselves. His message roused instant fear, but he also spoke hope to the people assuring them that God was with them.

Temple begun. Three weeks after Haggai's first speaking, Governor, High Priest, and people all united in starting the work. For a month the work went forward. The great stones of the old temple were still there, though in desolate confusion, as they had been tumbled down in Nebuchadrezzar's destruction of the city, sixty-six years before. There were old men in the city who had seen the former temple. They were quite too old to do much of the hard work of cleaning away the rubbish and moving the great stones into place, but they liked to stand around and recall the glory of the old building which the present workmen could not remember.

The practical Haggai saw that this would soon discourage the builders and promptly met the situation. It was the 21st day of the 7th month, the sixth day of the week's camping out in the vineyards for the

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vintage festival, known as the Feast of Tabernacles. How far the people were keeping the festival we do not know, but, if their grape crop amounted to anything they must have interrupted their building operations somewhat, in order to stay out in the vineyards to guard and to gather the fruit. The occasion was Haggai's opportunity to speak to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the people.

Promises for future. He frankly admitted that the present house must seem like nothing to those who could remember the former. Then he appealed to the Governor, the High Priest, and all the people of the land to be strong and to work, sure that God was with them and would keep the covenant made at Sinai. He went on to promise that Jehovah would soon shake the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the dry land, and the precious things of all nations would come, and he would fill the house with glory. The silver and the gold were his and the latter glory of the house would be greater than the former. There he would give peace.

Haggai appealed to motives that would get the men to work. If he meant literally that the magnificence of the new temple in silver and gold would exceed that of Solomon, his prediction was to be long disappointed. Nothing of that sort happened until just five hundred years later when King Herod began to rebuild the temple on a most magnificent scale. Some sixty years after Haggai's promises we shall find that the people have lost almost all respect for the temple worship — the precious things of the nations in the way of silver

and gold have not come. The practical man Haggai got the immediate work done, but he left some hard problems for later leaders to deal with.

Purification through temple. Zerubbabel to be Jehovah's signet. Two months more passed and the prophet found a new way to stimulate the builders. He asked certain questions of the priests about ceremonial cleanness and uncleanness and used their answers to show that the people were ceremonially unclean and declared that this accounted for their misfortunes. Apparently his thought was that when the temple should be rebuilt they could purify themselves.

On the same day, Haggai addressed Zerubbabel the Governor, promising the overthrow of kingdoms when the chariots and those who ride in them, the horses and their riders should be brought down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, Haggai assured Zerubbabel, Jehovah would take him, his servant, and make him as a signet, because he had chosen him. With this brief promise to Zerubbabel the words of Haggai end.

The promise was a dangerous one to make if it should come to the ears of the Persian overlords, for it implied hopes for the overthrow of the Persian rule and that Zerubbabel might be the new David by whom Jehovah would seal promises such as Ezekiel had given for a great, impressive victory.

We have other indications, at about this time, that the rebuilding of the temple led to hopes of the speedy establishment of the Messianic age, when a new David should rule a restored Israel. Haggai gives only a

hint of this, though a pretty clear one, and then his preaching ceases, only twelve weeks after the work of rebuilding the temple was begun. At least, no further words of his have been preserved.

Two short statements in the book of Ezra inform us that Haggai's prophesying, together with that of Zechariah, was followed by building activity on the part of Zerubbabel and Joshua, that the elders of the Jews builded and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah, and that they carried the work to completion in four years' time.

Brevity of Haggai's ministry. Why Haggai did not continue to encourage the builders beyond the first three months of their work we cannot tell. Some have thought that he himself was one of the old men who had seen the former house in its glory and that he did not long survive the beginning of the rebuilding. Perhaps this is the case; if so, Haggai is a fine example of the sturdy, brave old men, some of whom arise in every generation to put the young men to shame by their courage and hope in the undertaking of big and hard things. Whether an old man or in the prime of life we cannot tell. At any rate, the brief words we have from Haggai show us a brave and enthusiastic man who knows how to influence others and get things done.

Not a great prophet. As the true prophets are wont to do, Haggai sees the present need and looks forward to a better future, if only he can rouse the men of his day to do their duty. Unlike the great prophets, he does not see new truth about God and

man; he has not even learned the highest truths of the greater prophets who have preceded him. Nor is he a man like them gifted with the genius of orator and poet. He is rather of the plain business man type, whose words are few and to the point, who does not see much beneath the surface of life, but who does see the thing that needs to be done next and gets it started

Significance of second temple. The rude reproduction of Solomon's beautifully finished and adorned temple, which Haggai started, stood for full five hundred years, a century longer than its predecessor. Through generation after generation of subjection and disappointment, the temple remained almost always the center of the restored community of Judea. In time its service became regularly established and supported by a small tax paid by each faithful Jew. For a short time, a cruel oppressor stopped the worship and polluted the sacred place with ceremonial and moral abominations, but the loyal Jews rallying and fighting desperately drove out the oppressor. Then they reverently cleansed their sanctuary and there renewed their worship of a God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. As we go on to read the story of the men who strove to keep this worship pure, through long, dark centuries, we may conclude that Haggai was not far beyond the mark when he promised a latter glory of this temple greater than the former.

Important Biblical references: Haggai 1–2; Ezra 5: 1–2; 6: 14–15.

CHAPTER XII

ZECHARIAH, A SEER OF VISIONS

Zechariah's connection with Haggai. In the narrative account of rebuilding the temple, given in the book of Ezra, we found the name of Zechariah coupled with that of Haggai in the work of rousing and guiding the rulers and people. The book of Zechariah itself dates this prophet's activity as beginning full two months after Haggai had stirred all so deeply by his appeal. The work had been started, the workers had had time to get discouraged, and Haggai had aroused them to renewed effort before the date of Zechariah's earliest vision.

It was in November, 520 B. C., that this new prophet received his inner commission to speak and to warn his countrymen by the fate of the fathers who had failed to heed the former prophets. The following month, Haggai was speaking again, warning the people of their uncleanness and making his startling prophecy to Zerubbabel as the Davidic prince. It was a month after the last words of Haggai that Zechariah's characteristic prophecies were given. These consist of a series of symbolic visions reminding one of Ezekiel's manner, yet they are no mere reproduction of his thought and imagery.

Vision of horsemen. Zechariah's visions are seen

by night and are interpreted to him by angels, as Ezekiel's often were. In the first, riders appear mounted upon horses of various colors, bay, sorrel, white. The horsemen prove to be the Lord's messengers who have been sent to and fro through the earth and have come back to report the earth as sitting still and at rest.

Rebellions suppressed. If the builders had been encouraged by the hope that the Persian empire was breaking up and the era of their own independence under a Davidic prince was at hand, this source of hope must have been shaken by the course of events at this time. The accession of Darius was indeed marked by many and strong insurrections. High upon a great cliff in northern Persia, Darius was able to have carved, a few years later, an account of his successes in quelling the rebellions in Susiana, Babylon, Media, Persia, and other regions of the eastern part of the great empire which Cyrus had built up. The pretender to the throne of Media was supported by the Hyrcanians and Parthians from the regions further east. Of the latter people we hear much when we come down to the times of Roman conquest in the east.

New discouragements. Evidently news of Darius's successes in suppressing the early rebellions had now reached Palestine and furnished new cause of discouragement to the little community which had begun to dream of independence under a second David. The work of temple building, now progressed for five months, still gave little promise of beauty in finish and adornment. The fittings would be crude indeed

compared with the master-workmanship for which Solomon had commanded the resources of Phœnician materials and skill. If the returned exiles brought back from Babylon Ezekiel's description of the restored temple, with its surrounding courts, so much more elaborate than Solomon's, their own work must have seemed even more contemptible by comparison. Haggai had promised a shaking of the nations and the inpouring of silver and gold. Instead, the nations are at rest. The horsemen of Zechariah's vision serve to put in picture form the truth that is already distressing the people.

Promise. The angel receives from Jehovah and transmits to Zechariah assurance that the Lord is displeased with the nations that are at ease. He has returned to Jerusalem with mercies, his house shall be built in it and his cities shall yet overflow with prosperity.

The words of the angel indicate that the seventy years of captivity predicted by Jeremiah have now been completed. Jehovah's indignation has been poured out upon Jerusalem and the cities of Judah for the threescore and ten years named in 593 B. C.

Vision of horns. Vision of man with measuring rod. In his next vision, Zechariah sees four horns, the nations that have scattered Judah and Israel, and four strong smiths come to cut down the horns. Then he lifts up his eyes and sees a man with a measuring rod in his hand going to make a survey of Jerusalem. It is to be a great city spreading out like unwalled villages because of the multitude of men and cattle. It

will need no guarding wall of stone, for Jehovah will be a wall of fire round about. He will also be the glory in the midst of it.

High Priest and Satan. More is needed than the cutting down of the horns and measuring out of a great city before Jerusalem can attain her promised destiny. The people have learned enough of the lesson of the exile to feel a sense of national guilt. A sense of guilt unremoved may paralyze manly action. Zechariah's next vision is addressed to this need. He sees the high priest Joshua standing before the angel of Jehovah with Satan at his right hand to be his adversary.

These two figures, the High Priest and Satan, are new in Zechariah's time; no writing earlier than the books of Haggai and Zechariah has distinct mention of an officer known as High Priest. As a distinct office, this position seems to be one of the outgrowths of the exile. No writing either, earlier than this time, mentions Satan as a person. The Hebrew word "satan" is originally a common noun meaning "adversary." It is so used, for example, in I Samuel 29:4. In Zechariah for the first time, the Adversary, destined to play a prominent part in later writings, appears in Jewish literature. Since there is no such distinct personality set over against the righteous and just God in early Hebrew religion, we cannot help wondering whether contact with Persia gave Israel this idea. In the Persian religion, at any rate, the evil being plays a prominent part over against the good god.

Whatever may have suggested the idea of Satan to Zechariah, he now sees, set over against each other, two figures which are to bring into the Jewish and Christian religions long chains of influence. The high priest stands, in Zechariah's vision, bearing the sins of the people on his body, symbolized by filthy garments. Jehovah rebukes Satan, who stands at the priest's right hand to be his adversary, and orders the filthy garments removed and new apparel put on the priest, symbol of the removal of iniquity.

Another vision shows Wickedness in the form of a woman, put in a grain measure, covered with a weight of lead, and borne off to the land of Babylon by two women with great wings. Though the symbolism is strange to us, the meaning is clear. The seventy years of doom are fulfilled, Jehovah's judgment is accomplished, the sin of the nation has been purged away.

Individual responsiblity. Now that the sin of the nation has been expiated, the prophet teaches that the guilt of the individual shall rest only on the individual. He sees a great flying scroll, thirty feet long, fifteen feet wide. This represents the curse that is to enter the house of the thief and the one who swears falsely, and to consume it, timber and stones.

Messianic hope. With all this assurance of a new chance for the nation, there are clearer glimpses than in Haggai of the speedy coming of the Messianic age. Joshua clothed in the new garments and his fellows who sit before him are signs that Jehovah will bring forth his servant, the Branch or Shoot. The allu-

sion is evidently to the Shoot that is to come forth from the stem of Jesse, the anticipated greater David.

Vision of lamp and olive trees. Another vision reveals a great, seven branched, gold lamp, like that of the temple. Beside it are two olive trees that supply the oil for all the seven flames. The message of the vision is to Zerubbabel from the Lord: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit shall insurmountable obstacles be overcome. Zerubbabel who has laid the foundation shall finish the temple. The olive trees are the anointed prince and priest through whom the continuous golden oil of the Divine Spirit flows to the ever-burning lamps.

The Branch crowned. At a later time the prophet becomes more bold. When a deputation has come from Babylon bearing gold and silver for the temple, he takes of the gold and makes crowns for the head of the priest or king, or both, saying, " Behold the man whose name is the Branch." The narrative is confused as it stands and has evidently suffered some change, for one man is spoken of who shall rule upon his throne and be a priest upon his throne and, in the same sentence, we read that a counsel of peace shall be between them both. Probably the vision, like that of the olive trees, originally referred to both Zerubbabel and Joshua as royal and priestly heads of the state. Such an act as the symbolic crowning might easily be reported to the Persian rulers in a way that would indicate a plot to throw off foreign power and make Judea independent. Perhaps danger of this sort led to the cutting

of the prince out of the narrative, leaving only the priest.

Vision of chariots and horses. Zechariah's first group of visions ends as it began with variously colored horses which go forth, to and fro, in the earth; but these are not, like the first, simple messengers. Those that go toward the north, go to satisfy the Lord's wrath on Babylonia.

True service. When the building of the temple had been progressing for a little more than two years, the occasion called for another message from Zechariah. A deputation came from Bethel, the site of the old sanctuary of the northern kingdom which Josiah had polluted. They came to entreat the favor of Jehovah and to make inquiry as to continuing the mournful fasts of the fifth and seventh months which they have maintained during the seventy years of Jerusalem's devastation. The prophet sternly disapproved of their fastings and their feastings. He would have them rather obey the commandments of the former prophets whose message of right conduct he reiterated. Execute true judgment, show kindness and compassion to one another, oppress not the defenseless, the widow, the orphan, foreigner, and poor man. It was because their fathers had rejected these duties that a whirlwind had scattered them among all the nations.

Jerusalem's future. With the sad picture of the past Zechariah contrasted Jehovah's purpose for Jerusalem's future. It was to be called the city of truth, the mountain of Jehovah of hosts. In its safe

and peaceful streets would be old men and women leaning on their staffs for very age and happy boys and girls at play. The distant exiles would be brought back from east and west to inhabit the city. All would be his people, and he would be their God in truth and righteousness. As Haggai had reminded them, poverty and danger had been their lot before they began to rebuild the temple. Now the vine would give its fruit and the ground its crops. Jehovah's purpose of blessing was as fixed as his purpose of judgment had been determined. Their part was to speak the truth, do justice in the village court, plot no evil against one another, and love no false oath. These things Jehovah hated. Your fasts are turned into joyous feasts, the prophet proclaimed. You shall move freely from city to city in your land, and the people of the great nations outside shall come to seek the Lord's favor in Jerusalem.

Familiarity with earlier prophets. Zechariah had studied the writings of the prophets who preceded him. His visions are similar to those of Amos as well as Ezekiel. His thought and phrases show that he has assimilated the writings of Jeremiah too. He is sure that the time of devastation is at its end, since Jeremiah's prediction of seventy years has been fulfilled. Above all he is saturated with the moral teaching of the great pre-exilic prophets who knew that man's first duty toward God was to do justice and kindness, to speak truth and hate the false oath. These were the duties of the men of Israel before Jerusalem fell. Because they had rejected these duties, the great judg-

ment had come upon them. Now that the punishment has been accomplished, they are not to occupy their time in profitless mourning and fasting. They are to take up the old duties in good hope of God's blessing.

Zechariah and Haggai. Zechariah is a seer of visions like Amos, but like him too, he is a teacher of sound morals and wholesome religion. He is a man of education who knows the literature of his people. So, though he is not a great, original prophet, he sees far more deeply and widely than Haggai. The two prophets, through whose word the men of Judah built and completed the temple, were men of very different temperaments and equipment. In their efforts they supplemented each the other, and through them the difficult task of rebuilding the temple was undertaken and carried forward.

The second and the first temple. The last dated message of Zechariah was delivered in December, 518 B. C. At that time the work of building must have been well advanced, for it was completed in 516. The original temple of Solomon required seven years for its construction, notwithstanding the fact that the king was able to command the forced labor of the men of the entire nation and was able also to call upon the resources of Phœnicia for skilled workmen and for materials. The fact that the little community of Zerubbabel's time was able to complete the building in four years speaks pathetically of the ruder and less finished work that they must have accomplished. We should not forget, however, that the foundations of

the old temple were probably in their place and the stones of the fallen walls lying about.

The furnishings of the ancient temple were carried to Babylon in 586 B. C. and that is the last we know of their fate. The seven branched lamp, table of shew-bread, and other furnishings of the holy place and altar court might be reproduced for the new temple; but the hallowed ark, which had been the symbol of God's presence with his people from Sinai onward, could not be replaced. This and, apparently, also the mercy-seat and protecting cherubim were not reproduced for the new temple, so that the holy of holies remained empty of all material objects. When, in 63 B. C., Pompey penetrated to this most sacred place, expecting to find some image of the Jews' worship, he was astonished to see only a vacant inner room as the especial earthly abode of the God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Important Biblical references: Zechariah 1–3; 5: 1–4; Isaiah 11: 1–5; Jeremiah 23:5–8; 33: 14–18; Zechariah 4; 6:9–15; 6: 1–8; 7–8.

CHAPTER XIII

MALACHI THE MESSENGER

Two generations of obscurity in Judea. With the completion and dedication of the temple in 516 B. C., our knowledge of the details of events in Jerusalem is interrupted for two generations. There was probably not much to tell which future generations cared to preserve. The high hopes aroused in connection with the rebuilding had been disappointed. We know nothing of the ultimate fate of the prince-governor on whom Haggai and Zechariah had centered such expectations. When we do get a glimpse once more of the Jerusalem community, the house of David has disappeared from official leadership. A Persian governor is at the head of the province of Judea and the priests of the tribe of Levi are the chief native functionaries.

A significant time in Persian and Greek history. In the world at large the years, so silent in Jewish history, have been full of stirring events. Darius has organized the Persian empire into great provinces or satrapies, each directed by a governor or satrap. By the development of roads and a courier system for rapid communication, it has been made possible for the Persian emperor to keep close control of each district. By the conquest of the Ionian colonies, the empire has

spread to the Ægean coast. The armies of Darius and Xerxes have even crossed into Europe and undertaken the conquest of Greece. Marathon, Thermopylæ, Salamis, and Platæa have been fought in this period, and the Persian has been forever thrust back from European soil. The power of the empire in Asia, however, was still maintained for long generations.

Dangerous condition of Judea. Judea as a little sub-province of one of the satrapies, was closely associated with the remnants of population of the other ancient districts of Palestine, all of which were included in the same satrapy. The worship at the temple was maintained through all these years, but it came to be supported in a most half-hearted manner. The people began to question whether the Lord was not best pleased with evildoers and they could not find any evidence of a God of justice. The priests offered polluted bread on the altar, and animals that were blind, lame, and sick, such as they would not dare give for tribute to the governor. Even when a man made a vow to Jehovah, he would not bring one of the best of his flock in payment, but some blemished thing. When men came to the priests for instruction in the law of the Lord, these authorized interpreters did not give right instruction.

Malachi. Such were the conditions pictured by a prophet who appeared in Jerusalem sixty or seventy years after the completion of the temple. This prophet is known as Malachi, but we are very doubtful as to whether that was a proper name. Malachi means "my messenger" or "my angel." In one pas-

sage the prophet declares in the name of the Lord, "Behold, I send my messenger" (malachi). It is probable that the name was given to the book from this passage rather than the author. It is convenient, however, to continue the old practice of calling the author of the book Malachi, although we may recognize that this is really the title of a future representative of God, to whom the prophet looked forward.

Jehovah's love and Israel's disloyalty. Malachi begins by assuring the discouraged people that Jehovah has loved them. Their question instantly is, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" Like many honest people of later times, the only evidence of Divine love that they can understand is the giving of material prosperity. Since this is lacking, they doubt the love. Malachi meets their skepticism as best he can. He reminds them of blessings given to Israel in the past, rather than to their kindred, Edom. He assures them that the Edomites, who are now pressing hard upon Judah's territory, shall be overthrown. He goes on to picture the present disloyalty of priests and people in their insulting offerings to the Lord. Then he contrasts the honor that is, or shall be, given to Jehovah among the gentiles with the dishonor done him in his own temple.

Foreign marriages. Aside from the faithlessness exhibited in the wretched worship, Malachi finds another disloyalty, one that is perhaps more alarming for the future safety of the community and the truth which it must preserve for the world. In the close association of the Jews with their heathen and half heathen neighbors, they have come to intermarry with them,

even divorcing their Jewish wives in order to make such alliances. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah give some details of this tendency which make Malachi's warnings on the subject very clear to us. Even the priests and Levites had not hesitated to intermarry with the neighboring peoples; in fact, Nehemiah found, a few years later, that the grandson of the high priest had married a non-Jew. He found too that the children of those who had married Philistines, Ammonites, and Moabites were unable to speak the Jewish language.

The situation that Malachi faced was a critical one for the future of Judaism. The Jews in Babylon and those who had settled far up the Nile in Egypt seem to have found it easier to keep their racial separation and maintain their religious practices than those in Jerusalem. Perhaps the fact that these distant groups were among such utterly alien people made it easier than it was for the little Judean community, surrounded by ancient neighbors with whom intermarriage had occurred in former times. David and Solomon had both made marriage alliances with neighboring peoples, and David, according to the tradition preserved in the beautiful story of Ruth, had a Moabitess as his great-grandmother.

In the days of the kingdom, it would seem, no general objection was raised to marriages between the Hebrews and neighboring peoples. It was a later hand that pointed out the evils resulting from Solomon's foreign marriages. As the prophets came to insist more and more strongly that no god except Jehovah should be

worshipped on Israel's soil, it began to be seen that marriage with women of other religions involved great difficulties; but the subject of intermarriage comes prominently to the front only in the period we are now considering.

Malachi's work preliminary. Malachi was, perhaps, the first to take up the matter seriously. His message was, in all probability, delivered before Nehemiah and Ezra did their work. It was left for them to reform the practice, but Malachi had prepared the way for their drastic steps. Looking back we can readily see that the Jewish community which centered around the temple in Jerusalem was in danger of being wholly absorbed in the mixed population of the Persian province, of which it formed so small a part. The prophet saw that the future of the national religion was closely wrapped up with the preservation of the Jerusalem community, unmixed with other peoples. His sermon against divorce and the marrying of foreign wives was a first step in a series of events that soon shaped the Jewish community along the lines of exclusiveness which have been maintained so rigidly for the almost twenty-four centuries since.

Method of teaching. Malachi's method of instruction was singularly different from that of the earlier prophets. Instead of impassioned discourses and songs or symbolic acts and visions, his was the method of question and answer. The form suggests the familiar Socratic dialogue, which the great moral teacher of Athens was to use so effectively a few years later. When Malachi was conducting his dialogue form of

teaching in Jerusalem, Socrates was still a youth who had not yet begun his work of instruction. Malachi's form of teaching was to make some general statement, such as, I have loved you, saith Jehovah, or, Ye have wearied Jehovah with your words. Then he represents the people as raising objection to his statement in the form of a question, Wherein hast thou loved us? or Wherein have we wearied thee? In answering these questions the prophet sets forth his more detailed and definite teachings. Perhaps actual dialogues with his hearers lie behind these pictures of the teacher and the doubting questioners.

Elijah promised. Undoubtedly our prophet is best remembered for the messenger prophecy with the promise of Elijah to come as the forerunner of Jehovah's great and terrible day. The messenger is to prepare the way before the Lord, who will suddenly come to his temple. It will prove a time of refining and purifying. The Levites will be purified as gold and silver in the fire. As a swift witness, the Lord will come against the sorcerers, the adulterers, and those who oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless. The great and terrible day of fiery judgment is coming, but unto those who fear his name, the sun of righteousness will arise with healing in his wings. Before this great day, Elijah will come. He will turn the heart of the children to the fathers, and the heart of the fathers to the children, that the curse of the land may be averted.

As the books are arranged in our English Bibles, this promise stands as the last word of the Old Testa-

EVANGELICAL
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

ment. When we open the New Testament and read the life of Christ we find that the nearly five hundred years between the prophecy of Malachi and the public ministry of Jesus had not been sufficient to obscure the memory of the promise. When Jesus came with his winnowing fan in his hand, thoroughly to cleanse the threshing floor of Israel, men questioned as to whether this might be the Elijah promised or the Messiah himself.

John the Baptist and Malachi's promise. When we recall how the prophet Elijah, in Ahab's day, prepared the way for the great writing prophets by his message of Jehovah and justice, it is not hard to see that John the Baptist fulfilled the function of Elijah when he preached right conduct, to prepare the way for one who would give the fuller message. Elijah came to a nation which had never learned that Jehovah would not tolerate such dishonest practices and tyrannical oppression as were practiced in the nations worshipping other gods. John the Baptist came to a people which had substituted ceremonial purification, tithes, and offerings for the justice, kindness, and truth which the great prophets had demanded in Jehovah's name.

Place of Malachi. Malachi emphasized worthy offerings and full tithes and insisted upon complete separation of the Jews. The religion of the great prophets and of John the Baptist were essentially the same. They lead to the mountain tops that catch the first rays of the morning sun and look out to the higher peak beyond, where Jesus stands. Malachi,

it is true, is in the shadowy valley between the older prophets and the Baptist. His message of ceremonial offerings and complete separation was one for his time rather than for all time, one for the dark, narrow valley rather than the sunlit mountain peak. Yet it was given to him also to look up and beyond to the dawning of the new age.

Important Biblical references: Malachi 1–2; Nehemiah 13: 23–29; Ezra 9: 1–4; Malachi 3–4.

CHAPTER XIV

NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALLS

Nehemiah and the deputation from Jerusalem. Not many years after Malachi's teaching, an eastern Jew, who must have been a descendant of the Babylonian exiles, was living in the Persian capital Susa. He was a man of great ability and had risen to a position of trust, close to the person of the emperor Artaxerxes. Perhaps news had reached Jerusalem of the position this man of their kindred had attained at the court. At any rate, a deputation from the holy city came to Susa, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes I, the year 445 B. C. The prominent courtier, Nehemiah, eagerly inquired for the Jews that were left of the captivity and for Jerusalem. The visitors told of the distress and reproach that was upon those left in the province and of the ruined condition of the walls and gates of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem's condition. This son of the exile, at the far distant seat of the Persian government, had not known, or had not fully realized, the condition of Jerusalem and the men who had been left there. Seventy-one years have now elapsed since the rebuilding of the temple, yet no guarding walls have risen about the city. The people are exposed to danger and reproach from jealous neighbors if they attempt

PALESTINE
Syrian Desert
Damascus
Mt Hermon
Plateau of Jaulan
The Leja
Argob
GALILEE
NAZARETH
Tabor
R. Hieromax (Yarmuk)
CAESAREA
SAMARIA
Hill Country of Ephraim
Plain of Sharon
BETH HORON
JERICHO
JERUSALEM
BETHLEHEM
BETH SUR
Plain of Philistia
The Shephelah
MASADA
DEAD SEA, SALT SEA, MAR LOT
Mount Seir
Edom
Sela (Petra)
35°
36°
37°
33°
32°
31°

to keep themselves separate and to maintain the worship of the temple free from the contamination of pagan rites or to preserve the sacredness of the Sabbath and any other of their distinctive practices.

Nehemiah's request. When Nehemiah learned of the situation, he mourned for days, fasting and praying to God. As he served in the presence of the king, the next month, his sadness was noticed and inquiry made for the reason. Nehemiah told very simply, and the king asked what he would desire. Then, with a prayer to God in his heart, he made request of the king that he might be sent back to Jerusalem to rebuild.

Journey to Jerusalem. The necessary time of his stay was agreed upon and royal letters were given Nehemiah for the governors of the provinces through which he must pass. He received also a requisition upon Asaph the keeper of the king's forest for the timber needed. With an escort of officers and cavalry Nehemiah made the long journey across the mountains to the plain of the Tigris and Euphrates, and up through Mesopotamia to the crossing place of the Euphrates, thence down through Syria and the ancient territory of northern Israel to the mountain region of Judea.

Perhaps Nehemiah passed near the site of ancient Nineveh which had been the splendid capital of conquering Assyria, two centuries before. About forty years later than Nehemiah's journey, Xenophon led the ten thousand close by the site of the former capital and never suspected the presence of the buried city.

One wonders whether in Nehemiah's time, a little more than one hundred and sixty years after the city's destruction by the Medes and Babylonians, the memory of its situation had already grown dim. Nineveh, that lions' den that had been full of prey, was soon buried beneath the shifting sands of the earth's surface.

As the royal governor, with his military escort, came down from the Euphrates through Syria, clothed with authority from the mighty Persian emperor to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, he may well have been moved by the thought that this was the road his fathers had traveled as exiles. Stripped and barefoot, they had traversed the sad and weary miles almost a century and a half before.

Enemies in Palestine. Of his long and interesting journey, of the hospitality shown by the governors along the route to whom the king's letters were delivered, Nehemiah takes no time to tell us. The episode of the twelve hundred miles on horseback is covered in a very few words. What it especially concerns Nehemiah to tell is the hostile attitude of the chief men of the peoples nearest to Jerusalem, Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite. From these men the governor is to have much trouble, despite his royal commission. They are cunning and persistent and they are determined that Jerusalem shall not again rise to its old position as the dominant center of the district. If the Horonite lived at Beth Horon, his home was not more than a dozen miles to the northwest of Jerusalem, close to the border of Judea.

Tobiah, whom Nehemiah styles the servant, the Ammonite, presumably lived somewhere to the east or northeast of Judea. He was doubly intermarried with prominent Jewish families, as he and his son both had Jewish wives. He was thus in constant correspondence with Jewish nobles who were in sworn fealty with him. Well had Malachi condemned such unions, so dangerous to the future of his people.

The night ride. The farseeing Nehemiah did not trust a knowledge of his plans to any one. With the Judeans so intermarried among the neighboring groups it was impossible to tell whom to trust. Word would doubtless have flown quickly to the Horonite or Ammonite, if it had been known to any that the Jewish governor had come to the city of his fathers' sepulchers with authority to rebuild the walls. After three days in the city, during which we must suppose that the slow and elaborate formalities of Oriental hospitality had fully occupied the waking hours, the new Governor arose in the stillness of the night, mounting a sure-footed beast and, accompanied by a few trusty attendants on foot, he rode out of the city and around the outer circuit of its ancient walls, on the steep edges of the encircling valleys, where the débris of the ruins left the possibility for beast or man to pass. Not even the chief men of Jerusalem, priests or nobles, knew of this night ride of inspection.

Nehemiah makes known his plans. Supplied with the knowledge that his personal inspection had given him of the work to be done, Nehemiah called together the leaders and people. He spoke of the ruined con-

dition of the city and its gates; he proposed the rebuilding of the wall and now told of the king's permission. The immediate response was favorable, but soon Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian heard and laughed, suggesting that this meant rebellion against the great king. Nehemiah knew full well that if the story of Jerusalem's ancient struggle for independence from the eastern powers that had ruled it should be carried to Artaxerxes while he was in distant Palestine, his enterprise might easily be given the color of premeditated rebellion. Yet he met the ridicule and dangerous suggestion of his tricky foes with fearless faith in God's favor, and with a definite statement that they had no right in Jerusalem.

The work to be done. As in the case of rebuilding the temple the work must have been facilitated by the fact that the walls had not been entirely removed and their stones carried off. No doubt the foundation stones and some of the lower parts of the walls remained in place and the upper stones must still have lain near where the destroyers, sent by Nebuchadrezzar in 586, had toppled them down. The work would largely be that of clearing away the rubbish and growth that had accumulated over them in a hundred and forty years, and then of raising and replacing the stones and building the necessary wooden gates that had all been burned.

The Samaritans and the temple. Sanballat, rejected by Nehemiah, went to his kindred and the fighting men of Samaria and harangued them on what the Jews were undertaking to do. His people must have

been the mixed descendants of the remnants of northern Israel and the foreigners from the east who had been settled in the land by the Assyrian conquerors, just about as long before Nehemiah's day as the *Mayflower* voyages before our time. The pagan settlers had, after a fashion, learned to worship the God of Israel; then, under Josiah's rule, they had been compelled to give up the old sanctuaries of the land and to worship at Jerusalem or not at all. So they had some claim to the privilege of worshipping in the temple where Josiah had undertaken to centralize all the worship of the land.

Tobiah the Ammonite supported Sanballat's words with assurance that a fox could easily break down the wall the Jews were building. We recall, as we read Nehemiah's vivid account of this scene in Samaria, the Roman story of how Remus leapt in scorn over the unfinished wall of Romulus.

Conspiracy to attack. Meanwhile Nehemiah and the people were keeping steadily at their labor and the wall was half up. The news spread and reached the ancient Philistine city of Ashdod. A conspiracy was hatched between the Philistines and Sanballat and Tobiah with their Arabian and Ammonite associates. They agreed to unite in a surprise attack before the breaches of the walls were fully closed. The close relations between the Jews and their neighbors served to bring news to Jerusalem as well as to carry it outside. Nehemiah took speedy measures for defense, setting a watch and arming the men to guard their families and houses. The plotters had no mind for

an attack upon men who were prepared to defend the half completed walls and gave up their plan.

Measures of defense. Nehemiah now renewed the work with half of the men laboring and half standing to their arms. All the workers remained in the city as a guard at night while Nehemiah and his personal guard, always armed, never removed their clothes. With the governor was a trumpeter ready to summon the men to any point that might be attacked, for the men were not many and they were spread very thinly along the wall. From sunrise to starlight they labored.

Internal trouble. The next difficulty that had to be met came from within. Work on the walls meant neglect of the fields, and there were loan sharks who were taking advantage of the situation to force collection of interest and debts. They even took possession of the daughters of those engaged in the patriotic work, as slaves for their fathers' debts. When Nehemiah heard the sad complaints of the workers, he called an assembly and roundly rated the nobles and rulers, who were profiteering at a time when all must sacrifice together, if the community was to have a future. He scornfully contrasted their conduct with that of the distant exiles who were accustomed to ransom their brethren who had fallen into slavery. He himself, his brethren and servants, were lending money and grain to the workers.

His plea was that the nobles should restore the fields, vineyards, olive yards, and houses of which they had obtained possession and should remit one per cent. of

the money, grain, or new wine due them. The creditors at last assented and Nehemiah called the priests to put them under oath that they would live up to their promise. The governor then closed the assembly in true Oriental fashion, by an expressive, symbolic act, shaking out the fold or lap of his outer garment, which was used as a great pocket for carrying things, saying as he did so: "So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labor, that performeth not this promise; even thus be he shaken out and emptied."

Nehemiah's royal generosity. It had been customary for the governors to exact bread, wine, and money for themselves. Even their servants had lorded it over the people. Nehemiah, throughout the entire twelve years of his administration, received no support for himself and his house from the people. On the contrary he entertained regularly a hundred and fifty of the principal men at his table, besides the visitors who came from the peoples round about.

Further plots. When the walls were finished, but before the doors of the gates could be set in place, Sanballat and Geshem tried another plot, and rather a stupid one that could hardly hope to deceive so experienced a man as Nehemiah. They may have thought that Nehemiah's goodness of character would lead him to desire so earnestly a right understanding with opponents that he would risk his life to secure it. They proposed a conference in one of the villages, sending four times, but Nehemiah, perceiving their purpose to do him harm, invariably replied that he was engaged in a great work and could not interrupt it to come.

Then Sanballat sent a messenger with an open letter, in which was brought up the old, specious charge that Nehemiah and the Jews were rebuilding for the sake of rebelling against the Persian king, and that Nehemiah planned to be king. It was even charged that Nehemiah had appointed prophets to preach of him saying, "There is a king in Judah." Sanballat did not put forward these charges in his own name, but reported that such things were being noised about and might come to the king's ears. It would be advisable therefore for Nehemiah to take counsel with him.

It is not at all improbable that the too eager hopes of Haggai and Zechariah for Zerubbabel to prove the great deliverer of the Davidic line may have caused the death of Zerubbabel. Whether Sanballat was threatening Nehemiah with such a fate or not, he was probably acquainted with the Messianic prophecies of the Jews. These might be cited as evidence at the Persian court against any one who sought to restore Jerusalem to strength and glory.

Meeting dangerous threats with simple denial and calm consciousness of innocence, Nehemiah had next to face a plot that would have discredited him with the faithful Jews, if it had proved successful. Tobiah and Sanballat hired a pretended prophet in Jerusalem to warn Nehemiah that his personal safety required him to take refuge in the temple. If the governor had heeded the warning, he could have been accused of profaning the temple and, perhaps, of usurping the rights of the priests who alone could enter its inner precincts. Again they had misjudged their man. To Nehemiah

the sanctity of the temple was of more importance than his own life.

Important Biblical references: Nehemiah 1: 1–2: 20; 4: 1–6: 14; 6: 17.

CHAPTER XV

NEHEMIAH ESTABLISHES JUDAISM

Difficulty of guarding the city. From the time of Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem to the completion of the walls was about two months, the actual building requiring only fifty-two days. Since the walls were restored on their old lines they enclosed an area far larger than needed for the little community then living in Jerusalem. This made the guarding of the city from sneaking night attack a serious difficulty. As the entire wall of the pre-exilic city enclosed an area of not more than about half a mile from north to south or east to west, the community of Nehemiah's day must have been indeed few in numbers.

The guarding of the city was intrusted by Nehemiah to his brother and to the governor of the castle who had proved himself a faithful man. Nehemiah's strict orders were that the city gates should not be opened in the morning until the sun was hot and that they should be carefully barred at the close of day. Regularly organized watches were appointed from the inhabitants and so arranged that the men were stationed over against their own houses.

Nehemiah's diary and Cæsar's Commentaries. The vivid story of Nehemiah's first weeks in Jerusalem is preserved in the governor's own words. His

diary may be compared with the Commentaries of Julius Cæsar, as the personal account of events given by the chief actor and able leader. In both writings we see the direct, simple nature of great men of action. This is reflected in the style of each. Cæsar, read as it is early in the student's course, may not seem like easy, simple Latin, but if it were obscure it would not be selected so universally as the best work to introduce students to the great Roman writers. Nehemiah's memoir is one of the simplest and most direct pieces of writing in ancient Hebrew literature.

Dedication of the walls. When the walls were completed Nehemiah instituted joyous festivities in celebration of the great event. The chief men of Judah took their stand upon the wall in two companies, with the Levitical trumpeters and the people following. One company went to the right, around the south and up the east side of the city above the valleys of Hinom and Kidron. Nehemiah went with the other company along the western and northern walls until they met the first band, on the eastern side of the city, before the temple. Here they offered sacrifices with rejoicing and singing.

Return to Susa and second visit. At some time after the walls had been completed and dedicated, and arrangements made for the safety of the city, it was necessary for Nehemiah to return to his royal master in far Susa. How long he remained in Jerusalem on his first visit and how long in Susa after his return we cannot tell. About 432 B. C., twelve years after the dedication of the restored walls, his diary shows him back

in Jerusalem, with many difficulties to face there.

The high priest and Tobiah. The high priest, Eliashib, being allied by marriage to Tobiah the troublesome Ammonite, had set aside a great room connected with the temple for the use of this alien. The room was one designed as a storage place for meal offerings and incense brought to the house of God. Nehemiah speedily cleared out the household stuff of Tobiah and had the room devoted again to its proper uses. The fact that the high priest preferred his personal associations with a foreigner to the proper uses of the temple precincts shows how difficult it was to separate the Jewish community even at the center of its religious life.

Grandson of high priest expelled. Failure to support priests. The grandson of Eliashib had now married the daughter of the wily Sanballat. Doubtless the Horonite expected through this alliance to secure ultimate predominance for Samaritan influence in the temple and Jerusalem. Nehemiah summarily drove the priest's grandson out of Jerusalem. Such action would, of course, have been quite impossible had he not had the confidence and full authority of the Persian monarch behind his efforts. The priests may have excused themselves for making the best alliances they could in the district by the fact that the rulers had failed to see to the proper collection of the tenth part of the grain, wine, and oil for the regular support of the Levites. Under such conditions members of the priestly tribe were forced to labor in the fields for their own sustenance.

Enforcing Sabbath observance. Along with laxity as to the support of the priestly order went neglect of Sabbath observance. Some were treading the wine presses or loading their asses and bringing into Jerusalem their grain, wine, grapes, and figs for sale on the Sabbath day. Foreigners, too, fishmongers from Tyre, plied their trade on the day of rest. For all this, Nehemiah called the nobles to sharp account. He also gave orders that the gates of the city should be closed as it began to grow dark before the Sabbath and should not be reopened until the morning of the day after. To make still more certain that the orders were carried out and no burden brought in on the sacred day, he appointed some of his own servants over the gates. Once or twice the sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside the walls till the Sabbath was over, but when Nehemiah threatened them with arrest, they ceased to come. We can well imagine that there would be little quiet for the city with such a camp just outside the gates.

Reforming mixed marriages. On this visit, Nehemiah dealt very sternly with all those who had intermarried with the Philistines, Ammonites, and Moabites, whose children often did not know the language of their fathers. Unity of language in any age proves one of the most vital factors in preserving national unity of thought and feeling. Nehemiah was justified in his stern attitude toward any such intermixture at this time. His procedure in striking and pulling out the hair of those who were especial offenders seems strange to us in a royal governor; but it is not wholly different from the kind of admonition customarily ad-

ministered to natives in Palestine in modern times.

The Samaritan temple and community. Driving out the high priest's grandson who had married the daughter of Sanballat had very far reaching consequences. Down to the twentieth century A. D., there have continued to live on the site of ancient Shechem a little company of Samaritans, with their own high priest and with ancient copies of the Pentateuch which constitutes their Bible. This high priest is the successor of the grandson of Eliashib whom Nehemiah drove out from Jerusalem. Sanballat built a temple on Mount Gerizim and established his son-in-law, the heir of the Jewish priesthood, at its head to conduct worship there after the manner prescribed in the Pentateuchal law.

The Samaritans ceased to contend for the right to worship in Jerusalem and instead maintained the legitimacy of their own place of worship. This stood on the ancient mountain where Deuteronomy declared that the blessings were to be pronounced when Israel first entered the land. On this spot, sacred in the tradition of the past, and with an unquestioned descendant of David's priest Zadok to perform the ceremonies, the Samaritans could make a strong claim for the orthodoxy of their worship.

Four hundred and fifty years after Nehemiah chased the young priest from him, the discussion was still rife between Jews and Samaritans as to the true place of worship. As Jesus sat by the well at the foot of Gerizim, the woman with whom he talked raised the old debate, saying, " Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, but ye say that Jerusalem is the place where men

ought to worship." The Gerizim, like the Jerusalem temple, long ago disappeared, but when the present writer visited the Samaritan sacred mountain in the spring of 1913, there was on the summit a space enclosed by a low stone wall with a shallow pit in the center, where the Samaritan community, reduced to less than two hundred members, still sacrifice the passover. In recent years, the high priest has visited Europe, trying to sell for a large sum an ancient manuscript of the Pentateuch. Poor, but maintaing much dignity of manner, this priest has been wont to receive visiting tourists and to display to them a large scroll of the law, not however, the most ancient and valuable in the possession of the community.

Temple tax. We have been following down the centuries one aspect of the profound and prolonged influence of Nehemiah, and that not the most important. A more significant thing was the fact that the worship Malachi found so wretchedly maintained a few years before, never again fell into disrepute through complete neglect and indifference on the part of the people. When Titus's soldiers breached the city walls in 70 A. D., the Jerusalem priests perished, calmly performing the sacrifices at the altar. Nehemiah, with his practical foresight, had provided against any such shabby service as he found, by the provision of a regular temple tax to be paid by each Jew. This was at first one-third of a shekel, but a little later was increased to one-half of a shekel, as we find it in Jesus' day.

Nehemiah preserver of Judaism. Purity of blood. To no small extent, the existence of the Jewish people

as a separate race and religion to-day is due to the work of Nehemiah. Malachi and Ezra might protest against foreign intermarriage, but Nehemiah was in a position to put a stop to the practice by the only means that could have been effective at that time, the authority of the Persian government. The opposition of the Jewish people to intermarrying with those of other faiths has unquestionably been one of the greatest forces in preserving them from being absorbed by the peoples of other races and religions among whom they have lived through all these centuries.

Sabbath. Another persistent force in maintaining the Jews as a separate people has been the observance of the seventh day as a day of rest from regular business. In America this distinction is, to some extent, breaking down, but among the more rigidly orthodox Jews it is still maintained faithfully throughout the world. The Babylonian exile apparently led to a much greater emphasis upon the Sabbath than was known in Judea before the destruction of the city. The day of rest was one of their religious institutions that could be maintained while the temple was in ruins and they themselves were far from the sacred land. It is evident that those who had been left behind in Judea and who had rebuilt the temple cared far less for the rigid observance of the day than Nehemiah who came from the distant exiles. Again, it was only by the fullest exercise of his authority as governor that it was at all possible to establish a real Sabbath in Jerusalem.

Necessity of walls. To all the work of separation, the strong walls which Nehemiah had erected imme-

diately upon his first arrival were a necessary preliminary. Without their protection, the neighboring peoples would surely have found opportunity for revenge had any drastic reform of the mixed marriages been undertaken. It would have been quite impossible, too, to stop the traders who came to the city on the Sabbath, without the stout gates. Without those same strong walls and gates, it would have been difficult or impossible to prevent Sanballat and his Samaritans from sharing in the temple worship as they liked. Behind the barriers of wood and stone, it was possible to build up habits of separation in worship, marriage, and the observance of a day of rest that could endure centuries after the temple and city walls should fall to ruin.

Important Biblical references: Nehemiah 6: 15–7: 4; 12: 31–43: 13; 10: 32–33; Matthew 17: 24–27.

CHAPTER XVI

EZRA AND THE BIBLE

Connection of Ezra and Nehemiah. As an example of effective coöperation between two men of different types, the work of Nehemiah and Ezra is even more striking than that of Haggai and Zechariah. We cannot determine the time relation between the two, with the same certainty and detail, that we can in the case of the builders of the temple. Ezra is said to have come to Jerusalem from Babylon in the seventh year of Artaxerxes. If this date is correct and the Artaxerxes meant is the first of that name, he arrived in 458 B. C., some thirteen years before Nehemiah. There are strong grounds, however, for believing that Nehemiah's work of rebuilding the walls had been carried out before Ezra's arrival. If Artaxerxes II is intended, the date of Ezra's coming will be more than thirty years later than Nehemiah's second visit.

Perhaps the most probable supposition is that Ezra came soon after Nehemiah's first journey and cooperated with the governor in the reforms he undertook. In this connection, some have supposed that the date of Ezra's mission was the twenty-seventh year of Artaxerxes I and that this became changed to the seventh year in the records. That would bring his arrival in Jerusalem seven years later than Nehemiah's

first visit and make it possible for him to have worked at the same time with Nehemiah.

Foreign marriages. Hostility to the mixed marriages was one of the most prominent of the reforms associated with Ezra's mission. Like Malachi and Nehemiah he was deeply impressed with the dangers for Judah and her religion involved in amalgamation with foreign peoples. If he did reach Jerusalem before Nehemiah, it appears that he took up the matter with the people, as Malachi had done, before the governor came and dealt with it. Without political authority, Ezra could use only such influence as his position in the priesthood and his coming with the royal approval gave him. Accordingly, we read of Ezra's falling on his knees with his garments rent, at the time of the evening oblation, and offering a prayer of deep humiliation for the people on account of this national evil. Thus the people, it is said, were moved to penitence and promised to abandon the practice. It is clear, however, from Nehemiah's own account of his second visit to Jerusalem, in the year 432, that there had been no thoroughgoing reform in this matter until he took the forcible measures which his civil authority made possible. Whatever efforts Ezra may have made in this direction had failed of very decisive results.

Ezra the Scribe. Ezra appears as the one who led the people in the willing adoption of the laws and practices which Nehemiah's work made possible. He is called priest and scribe and is thus counted the head of the long line of scribes, or students of the law, who

played so prominent a part in later Judaism and appear so frequently in the narrative of the Gospels. If, as we have supposed probable, Ezra came to Jerusalem as early as the twenty-seventh year of Artaxerxes I (438 B. C.), his master work, in promulgating the law before a great assembly of the people and securing its willing adoption, is to be placed in close connection with the rebuilding and dedicating of the walls, at the time of Nehemiah's first visit.

Historical importance of adopting the law. This adoption of the law is a subject that must be treated at some length since it is a very important matter in understanding the whole course of Jewish history. We have read the story of the writing and formal adoption of the law of Deuteronomy about two centuries before the work of Nehemiah and Ezra. Deuteronomy then became the great standard (or canon) by which the Jewish writers judged all the leaders of the nation and explained the national prosperity and misfortune. At the time of Josiah and even during the exile, it is evident that the great law book of Leviticus was unknown to any leader of Jewish life and thought, whether prophet, priest, historian, or king.

The oral priestly law. The priests were accustomed to determine the correct practice in all matters concerning the observance of religious festivals, ceremonial cleanness, and similar subjects that were not provided for by the law of Deuteronomy. When, in the period of the monarchy, priest and prophet became distinguished as having different services to perform, the prophets became the preachers who taught God's

nature and his will for man's moral conduct, while the priests continued to be the interpreters of his will as to religious forms and ceremonies. So long as the temple stood and the worship went on in its regular order, the Jerusalem priests could hand down the traditional rules for offering sacrifices and all such matters to the young men who were in their turn to become full fledged priests. It was not necessary to commit such matters to writing.

Necessity for writing the priestly law. With the destruction of the temple in 586 B. C. and the cessation of regular worship, many details of the proper forms of sacrifice were in danger of being forgotten, or becoming subjects of dispute among the priests who remembered them differently. By the time the temple was rebuilt, probably all the priests who had been old enough to perform the full functions of their office before its destruction were dead.

Just such conditions and needs led to the writing down of various parts of the Bible. So long, for example, as the actual witnesses of Jesus' deeds and words were actively teaching, little need was felt for written records of his ministry. When the living witnesses began to pass away, the written Gospels became necessary. So, with the destruction of the temple and the possibility that its hallowed usages might be forgotten, the exiled priests in Babylonia undertook in earnest a compilation of the temple laws.

The Holiness Code. Influenced by Isaiah's thought that Jehovah was holy and that his people must keep themselves more holy than in the past, the priests

gathered together a group of rules to secure national holiness. So often does the word occur in this collection of laws that modern scholars have named it the "Holiness Code." With Isaiah, the Divine holiness had been interpreted as the ground for demanding moral conduct of man, right dealings in business and government. With the priestly compilers of the holiness code, ceremonial purity is more prominent than moral.

Laws concerning the offering of animal sacrifices are especially emphasized, with particular stress upon the prohibition of eating the blood. This is the life and it must be offered to Jehovah on the altar. Other laws prescribe at length the degrees of kinship within which marriage is prohibited, and the rules of ceremonial cleanness, especially for priests. The seventh year of release for Hebrew slaves, prominent in the earlier laws, is now elaborated into the full system of seven sabbatical periods to be followed by the great year of Jubilee when fields that have been sold shall revert to the original owners, and Hebrews who have fallen into slavery shall be freed.

Further development of the priestly law. After the Law of Holiness had been compiled by the priests, in the early years of the exile, Ezekiel the priest-prophet drew up his plan for the restored community. In this he elaborated some matters of Levitical organization.

As the years went by, the priests of the exile were not fully satisfied with the laws and kept writing down still more detailed regulations concerning the approved

methods of observing sacrifices, festivals, and purifications. Some of these rules, no doubt, represented the practice as it had been in Solomon's temple. Many are very clearly developments of the earlier practices. Like Ezekiel's plan for the restored worship, they represent ideals by which it is thought greater dignity and purity of worship may be maintained in the restored temple.

The book of Leviticus. The work of adding to the law probably went forward among the priests of Babylonia even after the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple. At length the Law of Holiness and a great number of these more detailed laws of worship were combined, with some narrative material of priestly interest, into a considerable law book which has come down to us under the name Leviticus. Like Deuteronomy, it was considered the law of Moses. Such it was in the sense that Moses was the founder of the priestly institutions of Israel, and the later laws were a growth from the seeds which he planted so well.

Day of Atonement. One great religious festival appears for the first time in the Holiness Code and is made very prominent in the later part of Leviticus. This is the Day of Atonement. Israel's earlier festivals were joyous, pastoral and agricultural feasts, somewhat like our Thanksgiving day when the Divine bounty is celebrated with feasting and merry making. The Passover, used as the memorial of deliverance from Egypt, embodied the earlier shepherd festival of rejoicing at the gift of the spring lambs with the recognition of the beginning of the barley harvest.

The Feast of Weeks celebrated the wheat harvest, and the Ingathering came at the joyous time of camping in the vineyards and gathering the grapes.

The Day of Atonement is very different from these earlier festivals of thanksgiving and rejoicing. It is a time of deep humiliation and confession of sin. The only happiness associated with it is the solemn joy of assurance of guilt forgiven, when the quaint ceremony has been performed of laying the sins of the people on the head of the scapegoat and thus sending them far off into the wilderness. The symbolism suggests Zechariah's visions of sin as the woman in the ephah flying off to Babylon or as filthy garments taken from the high priest. The exile had brought a deep sense of the displeasure of God; henceforth some great act of atonement was needed to bring to the people a sense of guilt forgiven.

The adoption of the priestly law. It was the law of the book of Leviticus, now for the first time promulgated in Palestine, which Ezra read to the people assembled at Jerusalem. The time of the year was the early autumn, the season when the law directed a week's camping out in booths or huts made of the thick branches of palms and willows from the river's bank. The celebration was now undertaken with public confession of sin and covenant to keep the law.

The priestly history. The Babylonian priests who compiled the law of Leviticus also composed a history of antiquity from Adam to Joshua, designed to make especially prominent Israel's covenant relation with Jehovah and to emphasize such institutions as the Sab-

bath, the rite of circumcision, and the temple worship. Another prominent aim of this priestly history was to show the genealogical connections of the Hebrews with their ancestors back to the beginnings of the human race. Into this history the authors fitted the book of Leviticus, in connection with the narrative of events at Sinai.

The two great histories of antiquity. The Babylonian Jews now had two histories telling the story of the past from the creation of man through the conquest of Palestine. Each of these histories included a great law book containing the commands supposed to have been given through Moses. The earlier of these histories, we noted in Chapter I, was compiled largely in Manasseh's reign, but it was reëdited during the exile when the law of Deuteronomy was embodied in it. This we call "the prophetic history" because its writers and editors were men filled with the spirit of the prophets. They were interested in the moral character of God and man more than in ceremonies and religious organizations. When we studied Deuteronomy, we saw that it was a revision of the older law code, under the influence of the teachings of the great eighth century prophets. The prophetic law book Deuteronomy was the final standard of conduct as judged by the editors of the prophetic history. The history composed in the age we are now considering, with the law of Leviticus as its center and final standard of conduct, is styled "the priestly history."

The completed Hexateuch. Not long after the composition of the later work, it seemed desirable to

some priest of Babylonia to weave together these two great histories into one treatise, much as the Judean and Ephraimite histories had been united in Manasseh's time. When this had been accomplished, the great work known to-day as the Hexateuch was completed. We know this work as six books under the titles, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua. All long works of antiquity had to be divided into short, separate books because the strips of parchment on which they were written were of limited length. Students of Cæsar, Livy, Virgil, Homer, and other Roman and Greek writers are familiar with the short " books " into which the longer works are divided. Originally each book was a separate volume or rather a separate roll. So the Hexateuch, although divided into six books, is really, in its final form, a well ordered and connected whole, giving the story from the origin of the world to the conquest of Palestine, as the Jews knew that story at about the year 400 B. C.

The Torah or Pentateuch. The Jews themselves saw fit to separate the last book of the sixfold work and group it with the great history of the monarchy. This makes a natural division, closing the history of antiquity with the death of Moses and beginning the history of the monarchy with the conquest of the land. To the five books thus grouped they gave the name Torah, law or instruction. Christians have been accustomed to call this group the Pentateuch, or fivefold.

Whether the prophetic and priestly histories were already compiled when Ezra the scribe carried the

law of Leviticus to Jerusalem, we cannot be sure; it can hardly have been much later, since the Samaritans have the Torah in almost the same form as the Jews. It is not probable that they would have this unless it were already the Jewish Bible at about the time the separate worship was established on Mt. Gerizim.

The Pentateuch the Bible. By about the year 400 B. C. we can say with confidence that the Torah or Pentateuch had been completed, separated from the book of Joshua, and accepted by the Jews of Palestine as their supreme guide in faith and practice. The Torah was now a Bible, the Bible both of Jew and Samaritan. It has remained the complete Bible of the Samaritans and, although the Jews have added other books to their Bible, the Orthodox have never put them on the same level as " the five books of Moses." Ezra the scribe played an important rôle in developing the Jews into " the people of the book " as Mohammed called them, a thousand years after Ezra's day.

Important Biblical references: Ezra 7: 1–10; 9: 1–10: 17; Nehemiah 8; 10: 28–31; Leviticus 17; 16: 1–22.

CHAPTER XVII

JOEL INTERPRETS A CALAMITY

Locust plagues in Palestine. After the reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra had been carried out — we cannot say just how long after — there came upon Palestine one of the plagues of locusts which occasionally visit the land. When they come they leave stark famine in their train. Such visitations have occurred in modern times, the most recent in the spring of 1915. Countless swarms of larvæ moved over the land destroying every green and growing thing. In solid masses they crawled up and over the high walls of gardens and up the walls and into the windows of the houses. No obstacle could turn them aside from their resistless advance over the land. The season's crop of green vegetables had just begun to appear in the market when these ravenous grubs came. The next day no vegetables were to be bought. Both in the caterpillar stage and in the matured form of flying locusts, similar to the grasshoppers which devastated the farms of Kansas a half century ago, they devoured every growing thing upon which they came.

Joel's description of the plague. A similar plague which came upon Judah twenty-three centuries earlier is described by the prophet Joel. There had been no such visitation within the memory of the people of that

day. The prophet felt that the tradition of it would be handed down for generations to come. The successive waves of the creatures ate every growing thing, even stripping bare of their bark the young shoots of the fig trees, leaving them white and dead.

The ancient writer describes the appearance and noise of the destructive swarms in most picturesque language, likening their advance to that of an invading army. The descriptions are strikingly poetic and yet they are just as true to life as though a modern scientific observer had written them in the most prosaic language. We note especially the description of the orderly advance in which the ranks are not broken even when they climb a wall; no one thrusts another, but each keeps his own place. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden; behind it is a desolate wilderness.

In any generation such a plague means unmeasured suffering to the people, but in Joel's time, little Judah was estranged from her immediate neighbors and her more fortunate kinsmen were living at a great distance. It would take many weeks for the news of the calamity to reach them. It would be very difficult for them to send any adequate supplies of food; at best, this would take several months. Under such conditions the calamity meant despair.

The desolate vineyards can produce no wine even for the drink offering of the temple. Without grain, oil, or wine, the regular offerings of the temple, for which such careful provision has been made in the newly adopted law, cannot be maintained. To Joel this seems the greatest calamity of all. The temple

has been rebuilt, the protecting walls of the city have made possible the guarding of its worship from foreign intruders, the regular temple tax has provided funds for maintaining the worship, and the people have learned to believe that through all this Jehovah's favor would be so won that he would make prosperity to abound in the land. Now the grain, wine, and fruit are all lacking and the cattle even are dying. It seems that the worship restored with such labor and such hopes must cease.

Influence of earlier prophets on Joel. Joel has evidently read and pondered through his youth the great messages of the prophets who had gone before. He recalls Amos's prediction of the day of the Lord as a day of darkness and destruction. He remembers how Zephaniah had pictured this coming day as one when Jehovah would consume man and beast from off the face of the ground. It seemed to him that now these forecasts of the prophets of old were being realized. He cried out, "Alas for the day! for the day of Jehovah is at hand, and as destruction from the Almighty shall it come." "The day of Jehovah cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." "The day of Jehovah is great and very terrible and who can abide it?"

Call to repentance. With these warnings, echoing from the prophets who had first taught Israel to see that their God could not bless a nation that did not do justly and love mercy and walk humbly before him, Joel called upon the men of his day to repent. He

bade them rend their hearts, weep and mourn, and turn unto Jehovah with sincerity. He remembered also that their God had revealed himself to Moses as merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness. He recalled the teaching of Jeremiah that, if a nation turned from its evil, the Lord would repent of the evil which he had spoken and determined against them.

Joel's great lack. Alas, with all Joel's intimate acquaintance with the very words of the earlier prophets, he had not comprehended their most essential ideas. He did understand that men should walk humbly before Jehovah, but he did not understand that, first and foremost, the Lord demanded justice and kindness. He did not realize that God desired mercy rather than sacrifices. Joel called for true penitence rather than outward signs; they should rend their hearts and not their garments. He urged a fast and solemn assembly, with the priests standing between the temple porch and the altar, praying for the sparing of the people, that they might not again be humiliated so that the nations should raise the old taunting cry, "Where is now their God?" Forms and ceremonies practiced in sincerity, these Joel counted the means of access to the Divine favor.

The night of legalism. With this prophet we find ourselves fully entered upon the legalistic period of Judaism. From the adoption of a fixed standard in the law of Deuteronomy on through the work of Nehemiah and Ezra, the prophet, seer of new truth, has been losing ground before the priest, administrator of

fixed law. One writer has styled the age upon which we have now entered, "the night of legalism." The night will advance into deeper darkness until the full development of Pharisaism, very careful to pay into the treasury the exact tenth of the garden herbs which had almost no value, but negligent of the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy.

Joel is a striking example of the extent to which even a man learned in the literature of former generations is a child of the age in which he lives. He had studied the great prophets, had learned their messages by heart, and missed the main point of their teaching. He belonged to an age in which it was necessary to lay great emphasis upon the forms of worship if Judaism was to be kept alive at all. The great reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra have secured care for the sacrifices, the strict observance of the Sabbath, and the complete separation of the loyal Jews from intermixture with other peoples. Such things as these the recognized leaders of Israel will insist upon and defend in the years to come. In the four centuries upon which Judah has now entered the voice of prophecy will not be raised, calling in the name of the Lord for honesty and justice in business and in the law courts and for kindness to the widow and stranger.

In order to keep itself alive and to preserve faith in a God not made with hands, during these trying centuries, Judaism had to put its energies to the task of keeping separate and preserving its distinctive worship. This we shall find a task almost beyond the powers of the group around Jerusalem in the troublous

times that are to come. On this need some of their greatest leaders had to center all their powers until the fullness of time should come and John the Baptist appear, a new Elijah with the old prophetic message of righteousness and hope.

Meeting the immediate crisis. Joel had his part to play in the age in which he lived and he played it well, both in meeting the immediate crisis and in giving new vision for the future. At his call the assembly was held, the people in their dire extremity humbled themselves before God, and the priests prayed that he would spare. It is not quite clear whether the devastation proved less complete than it was at first feared. Perhaps the late spring rains, "the latter rains," caused the vegetation to spring up when it had seemed dead, or, it may be, that it was only after the rains of the next fall and spring that the life of the field was renewed. Whether that year or the next, crops did come. The prophet now felt that the Lord had shown pity on his people and jealousy for his land, so that they should not be a reproach among the nations. Joel saw that the plague was but a temporary calamity and he felt that Jehovah had repented of the evil because the people had turned to him in humble supplication.

Outlook for the future. After the deliverance Joel called attention to the promise of the prophets that full warning would be given before the great day of Jehovah should come. He had thought the devastation of the land such warning, but he now forsees far greater preparation. Many will be prophesying before that day comes. The old men will be dreaming

dreams and the young men seeing visions; the Divine Spirit will be poured out upon all. There will be signs and wonders in the heavens. The apocalyptic promises of Ezekiel recur to the prophet's mind. He remembers that the great seer had promised a day when the sacred city, fully restored, would be attacked by countless enemies and, in its extremity, manifestly delivered by the power of God.

Joel does not merely reproduce Ezekiel's vision. His own creative powers are released by the joy of the deliverance that has come, and he sees a splendid vision of that great day of the Lord, one surpassed by no other in all his nation's literature. The dispersed of Judah and Jerusalem shall be restored and then the nations will be gathered together in the valley of the Lord's judgment to be dealt with because they have scattered and enslaved his people. The sons and daughters of the Phœnicians and Philistines shall become slaves of Judah or be sold to the distant Sabeans because these peoples have engaged in the slave trade, selling Hebrew captives to the distant Grecians.

Reversing an earlier prophet's promise of peace, Joel calls upon the nations to beat their plowshares into swords and their pruning hooks into spears and to come up to the valley called "Jehovah judgeth" (Jehoshaphat). In vision he sees them gathered, multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! In the words of Amos, he cries, "Jehovah will roar from Zion and utter his voice from Jerusalem, but," he adds, "Jehovah will be a refuge unto his people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel." Thus they will recognize him

as their God who dwells in Zion. Then Jerusalem shall be holy and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

Peter's application of the vision. Four hundred years after Joel's vision, when Jesus had died upon the cross, his followers, now assured that he still lived, were gathered together in the sacred city to await the moving of the Spirit. Jews were there, devout men from every nation under heaven. The wide flung Roman rule had made it possible for humble folk to travel freely from Spain to Syria, throughout the Mediterranean world. The disciples, awaiting in hope the promise given by their risen Lord, were moved with a great, mysterious power. Peter standing up to preach declared that this was the experience foreseen by the prophet Joel, when the Spirit should be poured out upon all flesh.

Joel, like the others who saw apocalyptic vision, pictured physical victory over Israel's enemies in the valley of decision. When the Divine Spirit came in very truth, he brought not material triumph, but power to speak the word of conviction to men's hearts and minds. The Divine message sometimes comes through war and suffering, but it was the day of spiritual conviction, when thousands were convinced of the truth in Jesus, in which St. Peter found the great fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. Israel still remained a subject province under the power of a foreign ruler.

Important Biblical references: Joel 1:1–2:17; Matthew 23:23–24; Joel 2:18–27; 2:28–3:21; Acts 2:5–21.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WISE MEN

The wise in Greece and Israel. Kings, prophets, priests, these are the men who occupy the front place in the stories of ancient Israel. Of such men we have been reading, but there were other groups of men who had a large part to play in the life of ancient Israel. One of these groups was known as "the wise." Men who filled a similar place in ancient Greece were called "lovers of wisdom," philosophers. In both countries these men devoted themselves to observing, thinking, and teaching. They were trying to understand questions and to lead younger men to think and understand.

Socrates is pictured for us by one of his pupils as going about in Athens, always with a group of young fellows around him and always asking them questions which made them think. So too in Jerusalem the wise men went about the streets, to the chief place of concourse at the entrance of the gates. Like Socrates they seem to have gathered the young men around them in these places to give them their good doctrine.

The open place inside the gate of a Palestinian town was like the market place of a Greek or Roman city, the agora or forum. Here the judges held court and here the people met and talked. Such an open square

may still be seen just inside the Jaffa gate of Jerusalem. Here the people still gather. It was in this square that they stood and listened to General Allenby's proclamation when he entered the city in December, 1917.

The interests of the wise. Sometimes the wise men of Judah watched the animals and insects at their work and, like Bruce with the spider, drew lessons for human conduct. More often they were occupied observing people, those who were lazy, those who were dissipated, those who were sneaking around making trouble, those who could not speak the truth. They saw that such men and their companions were alike fools, sure to come to trouble. Again they observed the rulers and honorable men who made their fathers glad, the diligent who acquired a competence, and those who heeded instruction and so found the way of life. All these they pictured as guided by wisdom. So, out of their own observation and experience and out of the treasured wisdom handed down from the past they tried to teach the inexperienced and thoughtless to choose life and to avoid the paths that lead to destruction.

Solomon's wisdom. The wise men of the later centuries which we are now studying thought of King Solomon as the first and greatest representative of their class. The famous king had astonished the men of his own day by his shrewdness in seeing through people who tried to deceive him. Later generations loved to think that the wise sayings they had inherited went back to him, much as people in America love to ascribe to Lincoln every good story that shows clever insight into human nature. When the Jewish philoso-

phers made collections of wise sayings on life, they called them proverbs of Solomon. According to the tradition preserved in the book of Kings, Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs and was much interested in "nature study," whether of trees and plants or of animals, insects, and fish. The great collections of proverbs which in later times became current under his name were, however, mostly occupied with human nature and its workings. Whatever he may have spoken of trees and beasts and creeping things has not been preserved for us.

Earliest collection of proverbs. The earliest collection we have of wise sayings ascribed to Solomon now constitutes chapters 10:1–22:16 of the Old Testament book of Proverbs. This collection was probably put together in written form not far from the time of the Babylonian exile. It is a curious little book, made up of three hundred and seventy-six wise sayings or proverbs. Each saying consists of two lines, except that one (19:7) appears to have three lines. Probably the third in this case is a half of the three hundred and seventy-seventh proverb, of which the other half was lost.

In the proverbs of the first half of this collection, the second line almost always gives the opposite side of the thought of the first line:

> A wise son maketh a glad father;
> But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

Sometimes there is a comparison instead of an antithesis:

As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes,
So is the sluggard to them that send him.

Again the second line may state the consequence of the first:

The law of the wise is a fountain of life,
That one may depart from the snares of death.

In the latter part of the collection, the "buts" largely disappear and the two lines stand in synonymous or synthetic relation with each other.

These two line proverbs often contain a great deal of wisdom about life put into the briefest form and one that sticks in the memory. Doubtless many of them were handed down from generation to generation long before they were ever written. Condensed wisdom in tablet form for convenient use, they may be styled.

A second collection. Another collection that went under the name of Solomon is found in chapters 25 to 29 of the book of Proverbs. Here again there are many two line sayings, but sometimes the same thought runs through several lines.

Put not thyself forward in the presence of the king,
And stand not in the place of great men:
For better is it that it be said unto thee, Come up hither,
Than that thou shouldst be put lower in the presence of
the prince
Whom thine eyes have seen.

In one case there comes in a poem about a diligent farmer that is ten lines long.

Anonymous collections. Connected poems. Other

collections that went into the making of our book of Proverbs are not ascribed to any one wise man but simply to "the wise." Here the wisdom may be presented in quatrains or even more connected forms which give opportunity to express some meditations as well as observation. In two instances the "words of the wise" contain connected poems. One of these gives a realistic picture, very true to life, of the experience of the drunkard, and the other of the sluggard:

I went by the field of the sluggard,
And by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;
And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns,
The face thereof was covered with nettles,
And the stone wall thereof was broken down,
Then I beheld and considered well;
I saw and received instruction:
Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to sleep;
So shall thy poverty come as a robber,
And thy want as an armed man.

Composition of book of Proverbs. The book of Proverbs is thus a great collection of observations on manners and morals, made up out of several earlier collections known as proverbs of Solomon or words of the wise. To this collection of collections there was prefixed a series of discourses in praise of wisdom (chapters 1–9), and there were added several bits of miscellaneous wisdom as appendixes.

Appendixes. Agur. One of the appendixes is called the words of Agur. Agur is one of those blunt,

self-made men who has not the learning of the schools and is proud of the fact. He thinks some of the philosophers are professing to know a good deal more than they really do know. One of the most interesting parts of the chapter that bears his name is Agur's prayer:

> Two things have I asked of thee;
> Deny me them not before I die:
> Remove far from me falsehood and lies;
> Give me neither poverty nor riches;
> Feed me with the food that is needful for me:
> Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is Jehovah?
> Or lest I be poor and steal,
> And use profanely the name of my God.

The prayer suggests Aristotle's famous doctrine of "nothing too much." The middle road is the safest. Perhaps Agur belonged to the great middle class himself. He is right that it is easier for those who are neither very rich nor very poor to avoid open sin.

In the latter part of the Agur chapter are some of the observations upon the qualities of certain insects and animals to which reference has already been made:

> There are four things which are little upon the earth,
> But they are exceeding wise:
> The ants are a people not strong,
> Yet they provide their food in the summer;
> The conies are but a feeble folk,
> Yet make their houses in the rocks;
> The locusts have no king,
> Yet go they forth all of them by bands;
> The lizard thou canst grasp with the hands,
> Yet is she in kings' palaces.

Lemuel. After the words of Agur come the words taught King Lemuel by his mother. In this instance the king's mother appears as the fountain of wisdom instead of the wise men. Of Lemuel and his kingdom we know nothing, but if he followed the maternal directions, he must have avoided some of the great sins to which kings have ever been tempted. The standard here given for a king is self control and righteous rule.

The virtuous woman. The book of Proverbs closes with an alphabetic poem on a good wife. It has been called "The golden A B C of the perfect wife." The successive couplets begin with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet in order.

A worthy woman who shall find?
Far above corals is her price.
*B*elieves in her her husband's mind,
And gain shall he not lack.
*C*omes good through her and not ill
The days of all her life.

Such alphabetic structure is not uncommon in the poetry of the Old Testament. Psalm 119 is one of the most conspicuous examples. Here eight verses begin with Aleph, eight with Beth, and so on through the alphabet. Very possibly the form was originally adopted as an aid to memory. The poem in Proverbs describes the good wife as the industrious, wise business manager of the household, the kind mistress to her maids, the generous giver to the poor, the trusted friend of husband and children.

Estimate of the wise. The men who composed, treasured, and taught wise saws and songs such as those gathered in our book of Proverbs may have been a little too solemn and wise to attract all youths of today, or of that day, but they were a pretty good sort after all. Their comments on life were generally shrewd and kindly and sometimes they were edged with clever sarcasm or coated with quaint humor. "The wise" were not the greatest men of Israel like Jeremiah and Ezekiel or Josiah and Nehemiah. They did not give the world new truths that would shake society to its foundations, nor did they build the city's walls and reform its laws; but they did teach the homely virtues and common sense, and something too of the higher virtues, all of which are necessary in any community that is to have a healthy life.

Proverbial wisdom is not so popular in these days of much printing as it was in times when books were few and papers unkown, but the sayings of the wise are not to be overlooked by any one who would fully know the Old Testament standards of life.

Other forms of wisdom literature. The wise men of Israel did not always confine themselves to the sententious mode of expression found in the book of Proverbs. Some of them dealt at length with great problems of life and thought. In our next chapter we shall consider the greatest example of this type of ancient Jewish philosophic writing. The book of Ecclesiastes is another instance of a wisdom writing of considerable length devoted to one central theme.—

What profit hath man of all his labor? Still it may be maintained that the typical form of Jewish wisdom literature was the proverb.

The son of Sirach. The wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach is a considerable book made up largely of sententious wisdom, written after the completion of the book of Proverbs. In hearing it read, one cannot easily distinguish some parts of this from the earlier book. Jeremiah referred to the wise men as a separate class in Israel. Like the priests and prophets, the wise produced a considerable body of writings of which several important examples have been preserved through all the centuries.

Important Biblical references: Proverbs 1:20–21; 8:1–4; 4:1–27; 6:6–19; 8:15–21; 10:1–17; 25:1; I Kings 4:32–33; 27:23–27; 22:24–25; 23:1–14; 23:29–35; 24:30–34; 30; 31.

CHAPTER XIX

JOB, THE MAN WHO QUESTIONED AND FOUND GOD

A well-known character. In the early years of the Babylonian exile Ezekiel referred to Job, along with Noah and Daniel, as an example of a righteous man. Evidently his name was well known to Ezekiel's hearers, although he does not appear in any of the historical books of the Old Testament.

The old story. First scene. It was fully two hundred years after Ezekiel's time that our book of Job was written. Not long before or possibly soon after Alexander's conquest of the East, a writer took the traditions about Job as the basis of his book. In a series of vivid scenes he tells the old tale. Job, dwelling in the land of Uz to the east of Palestine, was enjoying all the prosperity that could come to a patriarchal sheik and he was, too, living a life of highest virtue. His family reached the ideal number of seven sons and three daughters, for in the East daughters are counted less desirable than sons. His flocks and herds made him a man of fabulous wealth for that land. Year by year the clan celebrated with joyous feasting the birthday of each son. In his careful piety, Job offered burnt offerings for them all after each feast, lest any of them had sinned and renounced God in their hearts. This is the first scene of the story.

Second scene. In the next scene we are transferred to the heavenly court where the sons of God present themselves before Jehovah. Among these sons appears one known as "Satan," that is, "Adversary." The name first appears in the Biblical writings in the prophecies of Zechariah, early in the Persian age. In the second scene of the Job story, Satan has been traveling to and fro up and down in the earth. When the Lord asks him whether he has considered his servant Job, the most perfect man in all the world, the Adversary suggests that Job is well paid for his service and asserts that if Job's property is touched he will no longer be faithful. Then permission is given to make the test.

Third scene. In the third scene we come back to earth upon a day when Job's children are enjoying a feast in their elder brother's house. Suddenly a breathless messenger bursts in upon Job to tell of a raid of the southern Arabs, killing the servants and carrying off the oxen and asses. The raid is just such an one as the Bedouins are wont to make upon their more settled neighbors even down to the present day. Before this messenger has finished his story, another comes with news that the lightning has struck and consumed Job's sheep and his young men who were tending them. A third, close upon the heels of the second, tells of a raid of the Chaldeans who have killed the young men and carried off the camels. The climax of calamity is reached with the report of a fourth messenger that a great storm from the wilderness has destroyed the elder brother's house, killing Job's sons.

Fourth scene. Satan has used his permission to the full in trying Job's sincerity, and Job stands the test! "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" is his cry. Down through the ages it has been echoed by those smitten with great loss who have yet trusted in God.

Fifth scene. The shifting scene carries us back to the heavenly assembly. The Lord calls Satan's attention to the steadfastness of Job, although he has suffered without cause. Satan answers with a proverb, "Skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life." Touch his flesh and he will renounce thee is Satan's new claim. Authority is given to make this further test, only Job's life must be spared.

Sixth scene. Job is now afflicted with a torturing disease. He is covered with loathsome, festering sores and sits upon the refuse heap scraping with a potsherd his foul, itching flesh in suffering and humiliation. His wife urges him to renounce God and die, but he replies, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?" Job has met the tests.

Seventh scene. The news of the great man's misfortunes reaches three of his friends in their distant abodes. They make an appointment to meet one another and together go to bemoan and comfort Job. With all the outward signs of grief customary in the Orient, they come and sit down by Job for seven days, silent until the stricken one himself shall speak out.

Such is the old story of Job's sufferings and patience as our writer uses it for the introduction of his great

poem. The situation gives the occasion for Job and his friends to discuss at length the puzzling questions raised by the fact that the greatest misfortunes may befall the wisest and best men through no apparent fault of their own.

Israel's current philosophy. Before and after this poem was written the current philosophy of Israel was of the " honesty is the best policy " sort. Be good and you will be prosperous is the general theme of the proverb makers. Now a writer tells the story of an ancient worthy famed for his piety, who meets the greatest misfortunes and proves that he honors God not simply for pay. The story clearly suggests that there may be a higher motive for goodness than the rewards of health, wealth, or family. The story also shows that the current philosophy does not cover all the facts of life, for losses may come to one who is most faithful in all his duties.

Its contradiction. It was with this significant old story as a background that Israel's great poet of the fourth century before Christ took up the deeper aspects of human sufferings and of God's justice. Haggai had promised the people good crops if they would be faithful to Jehovah in rebuilding the temple. They had rebuilt and the prosperity had not come. Instead, near the close of the Persian rule, Palestine had been overrun by punitive forces and some of its people again deported.

. . Job's curse. The prose story ended with Job's three friends sitting by him in silence for seven days. The poem breaks the silence with Job uttering awful

curses upon the day of his birth. In the course of these he asks in despair, as Jeremiah had done before him, why he was ever born, why he did not die immediately after birth, why he cannot die now.

Eliphaz's vision. The contrast with Job's resignation at the close of the prose story is startling. Perhaps he has read in the faces of his silent friends belief that God is punishing him for some great sin and this is more than he can bear. Certainly when the friends begin to talk it is clear that they interpret his misfortune in this way. Eliphaz answers Job's curse with rebuke for giving way to grief; he assures him that the innocent do not perish and that the upright are not cut off. It is those who plow iniquity and sow trouble who reap the same. He tells of a vision that came to him in the night, showing him that a man could not be just and pure before God. He ends by urging Job to seek unto God and to commit his cause unto him.

Job's sufferings. When Eliphaz finishes, Job resumes his complaint, longing for death. Then he turns to his friends and reproaches them for not showing kindness to him. If they can point out to him wherein he has sinned, then he will hold his peace. He describes his sufferings of mind and body. The symptoms of his disease seem to be those of elephantiasis or black leprosy, named from the fact that the flesh becomes dark, hard, and cracked, like the hide of an elephant. This disease is almost more dreadful in its effect upon the mind, through terrifying visions, than in its horrid physical aspects.

Bildad's appeal to tradition. Bildad takes up the

discussion, maintaining that God cannot act unjustly and making the maddening suggestion that it may be because of their sins that Job's children have died. He is sure that if Job were really pure and upright God would give him prosperity. He appeals to the wisdom of the ancients for proof that God does not bless evil doers nor cast away the righteous.

Job and Zophar. Job complains that God destroys the righteous the same as the wicked. Whether he is himself righteous or wicked makes no difference, his misfortunes prove him guilty. Zophar, the third friend, adds his rebuke with high sounding praise of God's wisdom which man cannot find out. Like the others, however, he is confident that he knows God's ways and that if Job will purge himself of sin, he will be cleared of the guilt indicated by his punishment.

The friends' theory. The three friends differ somewhat in their approach to the subject. Eliphaz appeals to a supernatural vision, Bildad to the wisdom of the men of old, while Zophar emphasizes the impossibility of understanding God. They differ in their way of presenting their belief, but their view is essentially the same — Job must be guilty of great sin or God would not have sent him such misfortunes. Job sees the strength of the evidence against him, but cannot plead guilty to sins that he has not committed. He thinks that they are trying to defend the Divine justice by lying and is sure that is not pleasing to God. Job believes it better to be true to the facts than to argue for God dishonestly.

The view the three were defending had grown very

naturally out of the teachings of the prophets and wise men. If material blessings are given to men because they are righteous, it seems to follow that they are taken away because of sin. So if a man has great misfortunes, this proves him to be a great sinner. From experience, Job had learned that this was not true. To argue that it must be so because God is just was to his mind forging lies.

Second and third cycles of debate. Job's real quest. The discussion goes on through two more rounds of speeches in which the friends repeat their theory and become more and more direct in accusing Job of some great sin. One of them charges him with a long list of sins such as a man of his wealth and power might have committed. He is firing away hoping to hit Job somewhere. Job loses interest in what the three are saying; he is trying to understand God and he sees that they cannot help him in this search. He looks out from his own experience into the world and finds that it is not universally true that long life, health, and wealth are granted to the good and their opposite heaped upon evil men. The friends cannot deny that wicked men sometimes seem to prosper, but they are sure that judgment will soon overtake them.

Hope of immortality. Job longs to see God face to face; he is sure that if he could come before him he could clear himself. In this longing he reaches a momentary faith that after death he will be able to find him. From this high hope he falls back to his earlier conviction that the world of the dead is only a place of oblivion where suffering will be over. A

clear faith in immortality, a belief in a heaven where the wrongs of this world will be righted, had not yet come into the Jewish religion. Job comes nearer to expressing this faith than any previous character, but it is not yet a clear and constant hope. He does see that if he could believe in a future life, he could endure all the suffering and sorrow here. He ends protesting his innocence and not understanding why God punishes the guiltless.

Elihu's attempt. When the friends have been silenced and Job has ceased to speak, a young man named Elihu, who has been listening to the discussion, undertakes to defend the Divine justice and to rebuke Job for self-righteousness. Afflictions, he maintains, are sent to turn men from their sins to God; but he does not add much to the case made out by the friends.

The voice of God. Suddenly out of the whirlwind the voice of God is heard vividly picturing the power and wisdom seen through all nature, in contrast to man's weakness and ignorance. Job now feels that he has seen God and he abhors himself in dust and ashes.

Thus the poem closes with no solution of the problem that Job's experience has raised. He does not yet understand why the wicked flourish and the righteous suffer; but he is sure that God is both powerful and wise and he no longer asserts his own righteousness.

The epilogue. A prose conclusion of the book follows. In this Jehovah rebukes the friends for what they have said about him and tells them to go to Job

with sacrifices and to get him to pray for them. When Job prayed for his friends, Jehovah turned his captivity and gave him twice as much as he had before his losses.

Job's satisfaction. The conclusion sets its seal of approval on a man who honestly questioned what had been believed and taught about God and who tried to know and understand God for himself. Job did not succeed in solving the mystery of the government of the world, but he did get a vision of the wisdom and power of God that satisfied his eager, longing soul.

The great mistake. The idea held by Job's three friends that peculiar misfortune is a judgment sent by God for peculiar sin dies hard. It was still held by the Jews in Jesus' day. They thought that for a man to be born blind was a judgment for sin. Jesus taught that those whose blood cruel Herod mingled with the sacrifices and those on whom the tower of Siloam fell were not sinners above other men. Yet, even down to the present day, many sincere Christians judge life as Job's discredited friends judged it. The great prophet who wrote the poem of the Suffering Servant saw that God's true servants suffer for the sins of others more that the sinners themselves. Our Lord Jesus, the supreme Suffering Servant, is ever the final refutation of the idea that long life and all earthly prosperity are the natural rewards of virtue.

The great truth. It is true that to live up to the general moral standards of the community in which we are usually furthers prosperity, but it is equally true

that those who rise far above the standards of their fellows are made to suffer for it. The sure reward of virtue is not health, nor wealth, but the peace of God that passeth all understanding, a peace that may be found in sorrow and suffering and may be lost in prosperity.

Important Biblical references: Ezekiel 14: 14, 20; Job 1–2; 3, cf. Jeremiah 20: 14–18; Job 4–5; 8; 11; 12–14; 38; 42.

CHAPTER XX

JONAH AND THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

The historical Jonah. Jonah ben Amittai lived in the town of Gath Hepher, about eight hundred years before the Christian era. His home was, we think, among the pleasant hills of Galilee, three miles northeast of Nazareth where Jesus was to pass his boyhood, so many centuries later. This ancient prophet made a prediction that the kingdom of Jeroboam II would extend from the Dead Sea to the Lebanons north of all Galilee.

When Jeroboam's victories had at last brought about this increase of his kingdom, Jonah must have had repute as a seer; yet we have no further information concerning him in the history of the books of kings. Groups of stories about the deeds and words of the prophets Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha occupy a large place in Israel's histories, but Jonah had hardly a single verse devoted to him. Perhaps a brief tradition was somewhere preserved, telling of his being sent on a mission to a foreign land, as Elisha had been sent to the king of Damascus.

The Jonah of the story. The prophet writer. At last, probably at least four hundred years after Jonah's time, some writer of the restored community that Nehemiah and Ezra had revived and separated took this

ancient prophet as the central figure of a story. His well-told tale turned out to be a wonderful sermon, for the unnamed writer was a prophet far greater than his hero. It takes a remarkably good story teller to shape a story for the sake of the moral and not spoil the tale. Charles Dickens could do it, and the writer of the book of Jonah could.

The story. The command. As the story runs, Jonah received the Divine command to rise up and go to Nineveh that great city and cry against it because of its wickedness. This was no easy nor safe commission. It involved a journey of six or seven hundred miles through dangerous and hostile territory and bold announcement of destruction to a great and powerful capital. Nineveh was the city which the prophet Nahum described as the lions' den where the lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses and filled his caves with prey. It was to this great capital of the most cruel autocracy of antiquity that Jonah was directed to go with a message of doom from the God of far off Israel. We may not wonder that he preferred to flee to the other end of the world. According to the story, however, it was not so much the distance nor fear of delivering a message of doom that deterred Jonah. He wanted to get away from the presence of Jehovah, believing him to be too compassionate to carry out the judgment.

The flight. The storm. So Jonah went down to the seaport Joppa, on the shore of the Philistine plain, where he found a ship starting for Tarshish, twenty-three hundred miles away at the other end of the

Mediterranean. He paid his passage money and started out to escape from the compassionate God who, he thought, would send him to pronounce judgment on Nineveh and then show pity and so prove Jonah a false prophet. All went well for a time, but Jehovah's power reached out over the sea as well as the land. A tempest swept down upon the little ship. In fear the seasoned sailors cried each to his own god as they threw out the cargo to lighten the laboring vessel. Jonah, weary with his flight, slept below decks until the captain roused him with exhortation to call upon his god.

The lot. According to the ancient ideas that such a great calamity as this fearful storm must have been sent as a judgment, the sailors cast lots so that the offended god could point out the culprit on whose account it came. The lot fell true on Jonah; Jehovah, the God of heaven who made sea and land, had sent the pursuing storm. So it has become a proverb down to our own day to call anyone who brings ill fortune upon others the Jonah of the party. Jonah is ready to accept his fate and tells the sailors they must throw him overboard. They hesitate to do this and labor manfully at the oars until it is clear that the struggle is hopeless. At last, with a prayer for forgiveness they throw Jonah into the sea. Now the storm subsides and the sailors offer a sacrifice and make vows unto Jehovah whose power has been so manifested.

The fish. Jonah's penitence. The quaint old story goes on to tell of a great fish that had been prepared

to swallow up Jonah when he fell into the water and of how Jonah inside the fish uttered a poetic prayer. When we study this prayer we find that it is made up largely of quotations from various Psalms. Not all of it seems to be very well fitted to Jonah's situation; but it showed penitence so that the fish was directed to disgorge him upon the dry land.

Nineveh. Humbled by his experience, the prophet now heeds the renewed command and goes to Nineveh, Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey, the old story tells us, and the ruins of " greater Nineveh," the old city proper with its vast stretches of outlying dwellings, suggest that the circumference of the whole was some sixty miles, three days' journey. The ruined walls of the fortified city itself have a circuit of about nine miles.

Nineveh's penitence. When Jonah had come into the heart of this great community he began to cry aloud his startling message: " Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Now there appeared what has been styled the greatest miracle in the whole book of wonders — the people believed God and put on the sackcloth of penitent mourning. When the tidings reach the great king he lays aside his royal robe, covers himself with the harsh sackcloth and, like Job in his misery, sits in the ashes. He further makes a decree that neither man nor beast shall eat or drink, that all alike shall be clothed in sackcloth and shall cry mightily unto God, and *mirabile dictu,* that everyone shall turn from his evil way and from the violence in his hands.

The Assyrian kings were wont to ascribe their most cruel victories, when they wantonly conquered and deported peoples, inflicting the most awful tortures that their efficient militarism could devise, to the favor of their national God. Our story makes the king realize that violence is not approved by the God whom Jonah preaches.

Judgment averted. Jonah's displeasure. When God saw that the people turned from their evil way, he spared them and did not execute judgment. This was not at all to Jonah's liking. When had a prophet ever had a day of greater recognition than he? He had driven that great city into terrified penitence, and now the threatened judgment was averted and the prophet's day of power ended. That was the reason, he says, that he had not wanted to be Jehovah's messenger in the first place — he knew him to be a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness. He prays that he may be killed; death is preferable to his shame.

The gourd. Jonah goes outside of the city and makes a little shelter from the scorching sun. Here he sits waiting to see what will become of the city, hoping against hope, apparently, that it may yet bring Jehovah's wrath upon itself. The shelter is not a very good one, but a magic gourd grows up over it in a night and makes a refreshing shade. Jonah is comforted by this for a little while, but soon the ever present worm eats the plant and it withers. To add to Jonah's misery the sultry east wind begins to blow and he is fainting with the heat. Rebellious toward

God who would not fulfill his prediction against Nineveh nor even let him have his selfish comfort under the shade of the gourd, Jonah is angry unto death.

The Divine compassion. Now the Divine lesson can be driven home to his fretful heart, or at least to the readers of the story. If Jonah cared for the gourd which he did not even make to grow, should not God care for that great city in which there were myriads of innocent children and cattle too, over whom God's mercy broods?

Occasion of writing Jonah. It was possibly three centuries after the final overthrow of the city that a Jew of Palestine told the strange tale of Jonah and Nineveh's penitence and reprieve. When he wrote, the Jewish people had been forced to separate themselves from the neighboring peoples of Palestine in order to keep alive at all their race and their religion. The separation which Nehemiah and Ezra labored so hard to secure was necessary, but it had made the people think of Jehovah as exclusively the Jewish God. Besides, their sufferings had made them bitter toward other peoples whom they wished to see destroyed, in order that they themselves might be supreme as the peculiar people of the one all powerful God. Probably Artaxerxes Ochus, one of the last of the Persian rulers, had already brought their city almost to a second ruin before one of the truest and greatest of the nation's prophets used the story of Jonah as a protest against national selfishness and hatred, teaching that the God of Israel was the God of other peoples

as well. His compassion would spare the most heartless and cruel, if they would turn from their sins in penitence.

Background of Jonah story. The lesson that the Great Unknown had taught in the song of the Suffering Servant, the lesson that the sufferings of the faithful in Israel were the bearing of the sins of the world, had not been learned. The writer of Jonah had pondered the songs of the Unknown one. He knew that Jehovah's servant Israel had been truly pictured as blind and deaf; he knew that her enemies had been represented as a great water monster. Perhaps he remembered also that the Babylonian exile had been pictured as swallowing up and vomiting forth of his people.

National experience pictured. Filled with these poetic pictures the writer told, under the symbol of the prophet, the story of his nation's blind unwillingness to serve the world, of her being cast out of her land and swallowed up by Babylon, of her return to her land and the renewed Divine command to carry out her mission, of her now humbled spirit and willingness to bear God's message of judgment on sin, but also of her selfish narrowness and unwillingness to have the nations become partakers of the Divine blessings.

Humanism of story. Narrowness of people. Through the whole runs the idea that the worshippers of other gods may be loyal and true; everywhere they appear to better advantage than Jonah. The sailors

call upon their gods while the disloyal Hebrew sleeps. Even when they learn that his guilt has brought the storm upon them all, they struggle bravely to bring the boat to land before they consent to cast Jonah overboard. The inhabitants of Nineveh not only fast and cry unto God when the Divine judgment is pronounced upon them, but their king bids them to turn from their wickedness and from the violence that is in their hands. Jeremiah and Malachi had contrasted the unfaithfulness of Israel with the faithfulness of the heathen; Isaiah had looked forward to a day when the nations should voluntarily come to learn Jehovah's will in Jerusalem and all should dwell together in peace; but the people, like Jonah thought that judgment should fall on the other nations and did not dream of peace through the nations learning the ways of Jehovah.

An allegory. Forerunner of Gospel parables. The book of Jonah seems to be an allegory in which Jonah is Israel, the whale Babylon, and the great thought of the whole is that God cares for all peoples, even the most wicked, and that he desires his people to share his purposes of mercy to all mankind. Viewed thus, instead of being a narrative of ancient wonders hard to believe or a mere silly story, the book becomes the vehicle for conveying a truth that lies above the level of almost all the rest of the Old Testament. It is the forerunner of Jesus' wonderful parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, with their lessons of a compassionate God and a broad and generous humanity.

EVANGELICAL
SCHOOL OF THEOLO

Important Biblical references: II Kings 14:25; Jonah 1–4; Isaiah 42:19 (blind servant, page 185); Isaiah 26:21–27:1, 51:9–10 (enemies water monster, page 185); Jeremiah 51:34, 44 (page 185).

CHAPTER XXI

JUDAS THE HAMMER

Struggle for Palestine. During the larger part of the third century B. C., Judea was subject to the Ptolemies of Egypt, descendants of Ptolemy Lagus, Alexander's noble, who was left in charge of Egypt when the king went on to further conquests in the East. These rulers had not indeed held undisputed possession of Palestine. The Seleucids of Antioch, who had secured the eastern part of Alexander's conquests, extending westward to the Mediterranean, contended bitterly for the rule of Palestine. At the opening of the next century (198 B. C.), Antiochus III, known as "The Great," secured possession. This ruler was seeking to build up a strong state to resist the eastward advance of Rome. Defeated at Magnesia, in Asia Minor, he did his best to maintain his power at the eastern end of the Mediterranean.

Accession of Antiochus Epiphanes. The twenty years following Antiochus's conquest of Palestine brought comparative peace to the little community that had suffered much from the strife of the Seleucids and Ptolemies. It was only the calm before the terrible storm that was soon to break. In the year 175 B. C., Antiochus IV came to the throne. This ruler is commonly known as Antiochus Epiphanes, the manifesta-

tion of God, for such he claimed to be. In mockery, some styled him Epimanes, the mad man. Soon the old dispute with Egypt broke out anew; Palestine was claimed as the dowry of Antiochus's sister Cleopatra, who had married Ptolemy. In the war that arose, Antiochus invaded Egypt and besieged Alexandria.

Antiochus plunders temple. In the meantime there was much disturbance in Jerusalem because Antiochus had deposed the high priest, selling the office, first to one, and then to another who was not even of the high priestly family. The disorders that followed gave the king excuse to visit the city on his return from Egypt, and to plunder the temple of its golden adornments and of the treasure stored there for safety.

A Roman historian of the next century tells the story of Antiochus entering the holy of holies and finding there the image of an old man riding on an ass. He supposed this man to be Moses. In fact, the innermost shrine of the second temple was probably empty. The ancient furnishings of ark, mercy seat, and cherubim had disappeared with the destruction of the first temple. The writers of Greece and Rome could not comprehend a temple without an image, and so presumably, the story grew up of this image whose grotesqueness might account for the jealous way in which the Jews guarded the entrance to their inner sanctuary.

Retirement from Egypt. Two years later, Antiochus again invaded Egypt, but this time he met a new situation there. The Romans were not minded to have an empire built up in the East, and so the Senate

had sent a legate, Gaius Popilius Lenas, who met Antiochus in Egypt. According to the story told of this occasion, Popilius Lenas drew a circle around Antiochus as he stood on the Egyptian sand and told him that he must choose, before he stepped out of the circle, whether he would give up his designs on Egypt or fight Rome. Antiochus's father had tested war with the Romans and the son dared do nothing else than accept the humiliation of retirement.

Persecution of Jews. Perhaps this experience added venom to the king's treatment of his Jewish subjects; at any rate, he soon took measures to stamp out their religion and all the distinctive practices of this people who could not accept Greek customs that were bound up with Greek religion and morals. Antiochus had a small altar of Zeus set up on the great altar of Jehovah which stood in the temple court. On this he required swine's flesh to be sacrificed, so that the altar of Jehovah became polluted and the whole sanctuary unfit for his worship. Books of the law were destroyed wherever found, and those who insisted on carrying out its requirements were put to death. A new citadel, raised in the city of David overlooking the temple, was occupied by a Syrian garrison. Emissaries of the government sent about the land compelled the people to participate in pagan sacrifice.

Before this persecution arose, many of the Jews had been disposed to adopt much of the Greek mode of life; but the attempt to stamp out by force all that was distinctive in Judaism roused the determination of the people to resist unto death. Companies of

those who would not yield fled to the wilderness. Pursued thither, they were cut down on the Sabbath day when, in their extreme loyalty to the law, they could not defend themselves. Many met the martyr's death rather than yield to the demand that they give up their ancient law. All the loyalty that had been built up through the work of Nehemiah and Ezra was brought to the test.

Revolt of Mattathias. At this darkest hour, as the emissaries went about the land compelling worship of other gods, they came to the little town of Modin, a few miles north-west of Jerusalem. Here there lived an aged priest who had five stalwart sons. As the leading man of the community the officers called upon this priest, Mattathias by name, to come forward and perform the sacrifice first, promising favor and rewards from the king for himself and his sons. Mattathias answered, in a voice that could be heard by all, that though all the people in the king's dominions should give up each the religion of their fathers, he and his kindred would remain faithful to the covenant. When another Jew came forward to offer the sacrifice, Mattathias ran forward and slew him upon the altar and struck down the king's representative who was seeking to make the village apostatize. Then, calling upon all who were zealous for the law to follow, he and his sons fled into the mountains, forsaking all their possessions in the town. Knowing of the company which had been slaughtered unresisting on the Sabbath, they realized that such a course would only result in the destruction of all who were faithful to

Judaism. So they decided to resist if attacked on that day.

The Hasidim. Mattathias and his sons soon became the rallying center for those who were zealous of the law. These were called the Hasidim, or holy ones. With a band of such followers the priest went about the land pulling down the altars which had been set up and compelling a return to outward observance of the Jewish law. Just how long this state of affairs continued we cannot tell. It was probably only a few months before Mattathias died. Now the command of the band fell upon his son Judas, surnamed Maccabeus, the Hammer. He proved to be one of the most skilful and determined leaders known to ancient military annals.

Defeat of Apollonius. Apollonius the Syrian governor of Samaria gathered together an army to suppress the disturbances that had been raised and marched to the attack. Judas and his company fell suddenly upon the force, slew many, and put the rest to flight. The weapons taken must have been very acceptable to the irregular force which had gathered about Judas. The sword of Apollonius fell to the leader, and he carried it for the rest of his days.

Defeat of Seron. It now became evident at Syrian headquarters that this was no ordinary band of plunderers. Seron the general marched south along the coast plain and turned up into the hills by the valley which ran near Modin. Judas, knowing the country from boyhood, chose his ground where the valley narrows and the road becomes steep. Here, holding the pass,

his smaller forces might be able to resist much larger numbers. Arousing his frightened followers with noble courage, he leapt suddenly upon the host coming up the narrow defile and drove them pell mell down the ravine, till they came to the open plain where they scattered in flight.

The scene of the victory. This valley of victory was famous in story as the way by which the Amorites had fled before Joshua when Israel first entered the land, a thousand years earlier. Thirteen hundred years after Judas's day, Richard Cœur de Lion would struggle up the same valley until he came in sight of Jerusalem. Seven centuries later still, in the autumn of 1917 A. D., the forces of General Allenby would advance up the same valley, taking Bet Ur et-Tahta and Bet Ur el-Foka, Lower and Upper Beth Horon, and advance thus to the capture of the outposts of Jerusalem.

Antiochus's eastern expedition. The next battle of Judas was fought in the same region. This was the natural approach to Jerusalem whether an army was advancing northward from Egypt or southward from Syria. Antiochus realized that the Palestinian rebels were growing to dangerous strength, yet he himself had on hand an expedition to the eastern limits of his kingdom; so he entrusted his capital, his son, and the Palestinian insurrection to Lysias as Legate, while he headed an army bound for Mesopotamia and the borders of ancient Persia.

Defeat of the three generals. Lysias sent an army to Palestine large enough to call for the leadership of

three generals. It seemed that little Judea was now to be crushed. Slave traders hastened to follow the army with their silver, gold, and fetters, ready to buy the Jewish captives from the Syrians. Pitching their camp on the plain at the foot of the Wadi Ali, up which the modern carriage road to Jerusalem runs, the Syrians sent five thousand foot and a thousand horse, guided by their fellows from the citadel at Jerusalem, to make a night attack upon the camp of Judas, pitched at a strong point on the western edge of the hills that are round about Jerusalem. Word of the movement was brought to Judas. Taking prompt decision, he removed from his camp and with three thousand men stole down one of the steep defiles in the darkness. At daybreak he attacked the main Syrian camp on the plain. Taken completely by surprise, the enemy fled to the lower plain of Philistia, losing some three thousand men.

The Syrian camp with its following of traders was full of rich booty, but Judas had his victorious force so well in hand that he kept them from the spoils, ready to meet the army of twice their own number that had been vainly searching through the night up on the summit of the mountain range. When, in the morning, the vanguard of this army came to a point on the western edge of the mountains where they could look down on their own camp, they saw it in flames with Judas's force drawn up ready to give battle hard by. In alarm they too fled down to the coast plains, leaving their camp to Judas and his men. This brilliant achievement of Judas may well suggest comparison with the

way in which the fleeing army of Washington struck back across the Delaware, that stormy Christmas night, and captured the Hessians peacefully quartered in Trenton. Many of those who escaped from the shattered Syrian forces slunk back to Antioch and brought great confusion to the Legate by the story of their disastrous defeat.

Victory south of Jerusalem. The next year Lysias gathered a still larger army. Determined this time to avoid the dangerous passes up from the Philistine plain to the Judean plateau, he marched around to the south and moved up by way of Hebron. From this side, the roads approach Jerusalem in open valleys, where larger forces would have every advantage over the army of the Jews. During the Babylonian exile the Edomites had taken advantage of the depopulated condition of southern Judea and had moved into the territory. They were, no doubt, very ready to give free passage to a force coming to attack their hereditary enemies. At the southern border of the province now belonging to his people, Judas met the oncoming host. His forces had now increased to some ten thousand men, whose desperate courage was such that they inflicted heavy losses upon the Syrian host and forced them to retire leaving Judas in possession of the field.

Three years of struggle. Three years had now elapsed since the desecration of the temple. During this time, the little band of desperate men who had fled to the wilderness under the leadership of Mattathias had grown to an army of ten thousand. Flushed with

victory after victory, Judas and his army were now masters of Judea, save for the Syrian garrison which still held the citadel overlooking Jerusalem and the temple. They were now strong enough to keep this garrison shut up within its fortress and to undertake the purification of the sacred city and its sanctuary.

Important references: Apocrypha, I Maccabees 1–4: 37.

CHAPTER XXII

A HELPER OF JUDAS

Occasion of writing Daniel. During the dark period of uncertainty between the revolt of Mattathias and Judas's more decisive victories, one of the faithful in Israel wrote the book of Daniel. His task was to raise the morale of the distressed people. His message of courage and strength, with its assurance that God's deliverance was at hand, had its part to play in increasing Judas's tiny band to the ten thousand who repelled Syria's force at Bethsur, south of Jerusalem.

Stories about Daniel. Daniel selected by Nebuchadrezzar. First the writer told a series of interesting stories concerning Daniel, whom he pictured as one of the exiles carried to Babylon by Nebuchadrezzar. This Daniel, with other Jewish youths of noble family, was selected by the king to be educated in all the learning of the Babylonians. He and three of his companions soon drew attention to themselves by the fact that they desired to eat only herbs and would not partake of the wine and dainties provided by the king. In this way they avoided eating food that was unclean according to the Jewish ceremonial law. When, at length, the chosen youths were brought before the king, these four proved to be ten times wiser than the Babylonian magicians and enchanters. So Daniel con-

tinued to interpret for the Babylonian court all through the Exile.

Nebuchadrezzar dreams. Early in his reign Nebuchrezzar dreamed a dream that troubled him greatly, though on awakening he could not remember what it was. When his diviners proved unable to tell him his dream, he was about to have the whole guild of them put to death; but the hidden thing was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. He was able to tell the king both what his dream had been and what it meant.

The image. The dream was destined to become one of the most famous in all the world's writings. The king had seen a great image with head of gold, breast and arms of silver, trunk and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay. A stone cut out without hands had crushed the feet that were partly of the fragile clay, and the whole image had been broken into fragments.

The interpretation. The interpretation given by Daniel was that the image typified a succession of four kingdoms, of which Nebuchadrezzar's was the first, the head of gold. The succeeding kingdoms would be inferior until the last would be a divided kingdom, partly of strong iron and partly of potter's clay, which cannot be welded with iron. These great world kingdoms would be crushed and the God of heaven would set up a kingdom that should never be destroyed.

The fiery furnace. In the next story Nebuchadrezzar sets up a great golden image, almost a hundred feet high. He requires every one to worship before

it. Daniel's three companions, who have been provincial governors, refuse and are cast into the furnace of fire. By Divine intervention they receive no harm and the king decrees that no one shall speak a word against a god that can thus deliver his worshippers.

The king's insanity. According to the following story, Nebuchadrezzar has a dream of a tree cut down, only the stump being left. This Daniel interprets as a prediction that Nebuchadrezzar will be driven from men, to dwell with the oxen of the field and to eat grass until he shall know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men. For seven years the king was an outcast bereft of human reason and forced to live as a beast of the field. When his reason returned he was restored to his throne, knowing the God of heaven, whose works are truth and his ways justice.

The writing on the wall. The next story brings us to the closing days of Babylon's rule, years after the death of Nebuchadrezzar. The king has made a great feast and it has been his pleasure to use the sacred vessels brought by Nebuchadrezzar from the Jerusalem temple for himself, his lords, wives, and concubines. As they were drinking from these sacred vessels and praising their false gods, suddenly there appeared the fingers of a hand writing on the wall of the palace. Fear quickly sobered the drunken prince as he saw the part of the hand that wrote. The king ordered the wise men to be brought in to read the writing. The queen told him of Daniel and advised that he too be called.

Daniel translated the written words: "Numbered,

numbered, weighed, and divisions" and he interpreted the crytic oracle, "God hath numbered thy kingdom and brought it to an end. Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Persians." That same night, the proud king Belshazzar was slain and his kingdom passed to Darius the Mede.

The lions' den. When the new ruler had organized his great kingdom and made Daniel one of the three ministers who were the satraps of the provinces, Daniel proved himself so worthy that the king thought to make him the chancellor of the whole realm. His colleagues, jealous of this promotion, laid a plot for his downfall. They induced the king to sign a childish decree that any one who made a petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to the king alone, should be cast into the den of lions. Daniel continued to pray to his God, and so was thrown to the lions. An angel of God stopped the mouths of the fierce beasts and he was unhurt. Those who had plotted against him were now thrown into the den with their families and all were instantly destroyed. Then Darius made a decree that all should honor the God of Daniel.

Purpose of the stories. The purpose of all these stories is to emphasize the point that the Jew who is loyal to his God, through every temptation to share the life of the heathen and to give up the sole worship of the God of heaven, will be delivered from every peril. It is probable that the stories were gathered together during the century before the time of Judas

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Maccabeus, when the Jews were under the Ptolemies of Egypt and were in danger of adopting foreign practices and recognizing foreign gods.

Their use by the writer. After the outbreak of the revolt against the Syrian-Greek rulers under Mattathias, when refusal to adopt the Greek worship had meant a martyr's death to so many, the faithful needed, as almost never before, assurance that God would care for his loyal worshippers. At this time, a Jewish writer took the Daniel stories and used them as the prelude to a series of visions that had a bearing even more direct on the needs of his own day.

Historical basis of visions. Time of writing. The vision of the image in the group of stories had pictured the succession of world kingdoms as the author of the Daniel stories understood it — Nebuchadrezzar's Babylon, Darius's Media, Cyrus's Persia, Alexander's conquering Greek kingdom, divided afterward between the Ptolemies and Seleucids, partly now of strong iron and partly of fragile clay. Our author, in chapters 7 to 12, builds in part upon this foundation in his visions of history, but he also knows the details of the struggles between Egypt and Syria, that carry us down into the times of Antiochus Epiphanes, of the desecration of the temple in the year 168 B. C., and of the beginning of the Maccabean revolt. He does not know of the great successes of Judas that gave him the mastery of the city by 165 B. C. and, apparently, he does not know of Antiochus's expedition against Persia. It seems therefore that he was writing after the outbreak of the revolt in 168 and before the ex-

peditions which Lysias launched against Judas in 166 and 165 B. C.

Vision of four beasts. The visions of chapters 7 to 12 begin with four great beasts coming up from the sea. The first beast was like the winged lions which guarded the palaces of Babylonia. It was, however, made to stand on two feet like a man and had a man's heart given to it, while its wings were plucked away. The second was like a bear and in its teeth it carried three ribs. The next was a four headed, winged leopard. The fourth could not be likened to the others nor to any known creature. Its teeth were of iron, it had ten horns, and it devoured, and stamped, destroying terribly. A little horn appeared and uprooted three of the ten; a most curious horn it proved to be, for it had human eyes and a mouth speaking great things.

Next thrones were set and one who was ancient of days, all white in hair and garments, sat upon a throne of flames. The last beast was slain and its body destroyed and given to be burned. Then there came with the clouds of heaven one like a son of man. He was brought before the ancient of days and to him there was given a universal and everlasting dominion.

Interpretation. When the vision is interpreted to Daniel, it proves to be the story of four kings, or kingdoms, who are to be succeeded by the rule of the saints of the Most High. The little horn makes war with the saints and prevails until the ancient of days comes and judgment is given to the saints. The fourth beast is explained as the fourth kingdom, its ten horns as

ten kings, three of whom shall be put down by another king who shall wear out the saints of the Most High and think to change the times and the law. The saints shall be given into his hands for three and a half years, but then the judgment shall be set and his dominion shall be taken away.

The readers of that time no doubt would recognize the four kingdoms as those represented by the image. The little horn is the present ruler, who had obtained the kingdom against other claimants of the line and has spoken great things, seeking to change completely the times and the law of the Jewish worship. Now he is wearing out the saints of the Most High who have been given into his hand, but this will continue for only half seven years, a time and times and half a time. Then the kingdom shall pass to the harassed saints.

The ram and goat. In the next vision, that of the ram and the he goat, the Medo-Persian and Greek kingdoms are symbolized. Here again Antiochus appears as a little horn who destroys the mighty ones and the holy people, but he is himself to be broken without human agency.

Thus in successive visions, full of strange imagery such as Ezekiel had first used, the writer of the book of Daniel assures the hard pressed faithful that the success of Antiochus will be brief and that deliverance will come speedily.

The seventy weeks. Jeremiah had predicted a punishment of seventy years for the nation, but it seems to this writer that judgment has lasted long beyond that period, and he interprets the time as seventy weeks

of years. At the end of the first seven weeks, forty-nine years, there had come a partial deliverance. This corresponds closely with the time from the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 to the fall of Babylon in 538 B. C. Then there had come a long period, sixty-two weeks, followed by the final week in the midst of which the sacrifices were stopped. The last half of this seven year period seems to be the time already anticipated for the interruption to last.

Historical conflicts. Future life. With less symbolism than in the previous surveys of history, the writer now describes the conflicts between Persia and Greece and those between Syria and Egypt, down to the time of Antiochus, who will, he expects, meet his death in a third expedition against Egypt.

The visions of Daniel end with a description of the time of trouble which is to last for three and a half years, while the abomination of desolation, the altar of Zeus set up on Jehovah's altar, shall stand. While the wicked do wickedly many shall make themselves white and be refined. In this connection there is given a clearer expression of faith in a future life than we found in the book of Job, a life in which they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament.

Structure of book. The writer of the book of Daniel was one of the party of the Hasidim who believed that the dark night would surely end in glorious day, when God himself would judge and destroy the impious king. To bring this faith to others, he chose the stories about an earlier worthy who had been faithful in exile and danger, and he added to these

narratives visions which he put into the mouth of his hero. In writing the visions, he produced a great example of apocalyptic literature.

Apocalypse. In a fully developed apocalypse, history which is already past at the time of the writer is told under symbols of animals, etc., as though it had been thus pictured in advance by some ancient man of renown, a Daniel, an Enoch, or a Moses. The history is told down to the time of the writer, a time when Israel's enemies are triumphant, and then the actual course of history gives place to vivid hopes of speedy judgment and deliverance.

It was chiefly in this type of literature that the faithful Jews of the first and second century before Christ expressed their hopes of a Messiah, God anointed one, who should come to bring deliverance, or again pictured God himself as the deliverer. Only a small part of these writings was included by the Jewish rabbis in their sacred literature or Bible. The book of Daniel was the only large apocalypse included in the Bible of the Jews of Palestine, although there are apocalyptic elements in Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Joel.

The Jewish apocalyptic writings served to keep alive the hope of the nation in many a dark hour, but their expectation of bloody triumph over enemies embodies a very different idea of the kingdom of God and of salvation from that which Jesus taught in parables and realized in his suffering and death.

Important Biblical references: The Book of Daniel, especially chapters 1–2, 7–8, 12.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE MACCABEAN BROTHERS

Feast of Dedication. In December, even down to the present time, the Jewish people observe the feast of Dedication; the feast of Lights it is often called from the burning of candles in connection with the celebration. It was at the time of this joyous feast, the 12th of December, 1917, that General Allenby entered Jerusalem and brought to an end four hundred years of Turkish misrule. Since the Jewish calendar is governed by the moon, the date of the feast, 25th Chisleu, varies somewhat in the month of December, but it is never far distant from the Christian Christmas with its lights and joy. The feast commemorates the great day when Judas and his followers were able to cleanse and dedicate anew the Jerusalem temple, after its defilement by Antiochus.

Conditions in 165 B. C. The Syrian king himself was still on his eastern campaign, Lysias had withdrawn to Syria after his disheartening experience at Bethsur, and the Syrian garrison at Jerusalem was kept fast shut within the citadel. The sanctuary had lain desolate for three full years, the gates had been burned, bushes were growing rampant in the court, and the priests' chambers were lying in ruins. The central building had been spared and the great stone altar still

stood before it, but this had been defiled by heathen sacrifice performed upon the Zeus altar erected upon it. We cannot wonder that the people on that day made great lamentation.

Restoration of worship. Ever on the alert to meet the practical need, Judas appointed certain men to hold in check the citadel garrison while others undertook the cleansing. The carrying out of the defiled stones was entrusted to faithful priests; but none could decide what should be done with the desecrated altar. It was too sacred to be cast out and too polluted to be used. So they decided to lay the stones aside until there should come a prophet to give them a sure oracle concerning it. With fresh, uncut stones they built a new altar like the old. After restoring the holy place, they brought in the furnishings of the temple, burned incense, lighted anew the seven branched lamp, and set forth the shew bread as of old. Then, on the 25th day of the month, they resumed the daily, morning sacrifice and proceeded to rededicate the entire sanctuary with a festival of music and song that continued for the space of eight days. About the entire sacred area they built up high walls and towers and made it a most defensible citadel, guarded by an adequate force.

Local campaigns. As in the days of Nehemiah the little province of Judea was surrounded by hostile peoples who did not wish to see Jerusalem independent and prosperous. The Edomites now in possession of southern Judea were the first to make trouble. Judas marched against them and, at "the Scorpion Pass" southwest of the Dead Sea, defeated them. In the

ancient territory of Ammon, east of the Jordan, danger next demanded his attention. There he met a large force under a Syrian officer and in a succession of engagements was wholly successful. On his return to Jerusalem, news reached him of threatened attacks upon the Jews of Gilead and Galilee. Evidently the Jewish people were widely spread throughout the territory that had once formed the kingdom of David and Solomon. To all their co-religionists Judas and his associates felt responsibility.

Simon and Jonathan. Judas's older brother Simon and younger brother Jonathan now come prominently into the history. In the earlier struggles these men have been in the background, subordinate to the military genius who has led in the encounters with the successive Syrian armies. Later the leadership will fall in turn upon Jonathan and Simon. For the present the elder brother is put in charge of the force of three thousand that is to march into Galilee while Judas and Jonathan lead eight thousand into Gilead. Both expeditions are victorious and they bring back to Judea their fellow countrymen who were no longer safe in those outlying districts.

In the meantime the Jerusalem forces, under two leaders who were not of the Maccabean family, had made an unsuccessful and costly attack upon the Syrian general Gorgias who had remained in Philistia since the battle against the three generals. Both the victories and the defeat seemed to make it evident that the Maccabean brothers alone were God's chosen instruments of deliverance.

Death of Antiochus. In the next year after the rededication of the temple, news came that the arch enemy of Judaism had met his death while on his expedition into Mesopotamia. To his kingdom he had bequeathed faction and bloodshed by appointing one of his generals regent and guardian of his young son, in place of Lysias whom he had left in control of Antioch. For many years the throne was to be the object of constant strife. The contending regents, a son of Antiochus's older brother named Demetrius, his sons Demetrius II and Antiochus Sidetes, a pretender Alexander Balas and his young son Antiochus, supported by his father's former general Tryphon who finally threw off pretense and attempted to make himself king — all these struggled for the rule and each attained more or less complete dominance for a time, within the period of thirty years following the death of Antiochus Epiphanes. Fortunately we need not follow the details of these wretched struggles. We need only note how they revealed the weakness of the Syrian throne and made possible the fuller attainment of liberty for Judea.

Religious liberty. The time now seemed favorable for a siege of the citadel, but word of the danger reached Lysias in Antioch and he sent a great army to the relief of the small Syrian garrison. The host marched down through the Philistine plains, and up through Edom, approaching the city by the more open route from the south. Judas took his post where the natural approaches met, a few miles south of the city, but the invading host was too great and after a des-

perate battle he withdrew to the city, there to stand siege. Soon the return of the new regent from the east made the presence of Lysias in Antioch essential, and he was forced to make terms with Judas, recognizing the religious liberty of the Jews. This marks the formal end of the Syrian attempt to stamp out the Jewish worship.

Internal dissension. The year 162 B. C. thus marked the close of the struggle for liberty of worship, but Syria still claimed political dominance, and Syrian garrisons still occupied the Jerusalem citadel and other strongholds, ready to enforce claims for tribute. The Hasidim were satisfied with the restoration of worship and the appointment of a new high priest of the legitimate Aaronic line. With the Maccabean hopes for complete independence they had scant sympathy. So, when the high priest, who was at heart a Hellenist, appealed to the king for support against the dominant influence of Judas, they did not see the real danger to themselves in such a priest, but were ready to accept his authority. Judas, however, still had sufficient support to keep the new high priest, Alcimus, out of the temple and to defeat a Syrian army sent to his support under Nicanor.

Death of Judas. The new king Demetrius sent another army against Judas whose followers had now dwindled to a little band of eight hundred men. These fought desperately, but their leader fell and the day was lost. For seven years, from the time when his father Mattathias raised the standard of revolt against Antiochus to the fateful battle of Eleasa in 161 B. C.,

Judas had endured incredible labors. He did not lead vast armies and make great foreign campaigns like the more famous generals of history, but in the limited territory given him to defend, he showed talents of leadership and insight into strategy such as few military leaders have possessed. Had his own people continued to give him united support, he might well have been able to maintain himself for many years longer and to win political independence for his land. As it was, he won for his people religious freedom and preserved Judaism from destruction.

Confusion in Judea. With the downfall of Judas the Syrian forces were in complete control in the land and his followers were hunted out and punished. The faithful turned to Jonathan for leadership as he made his camp in the difficult wilderness of Tekoa, some twelve miles south of Jerusalem. Another brother, John, was sent across the Jordan with the baggage of the band to the friendly Nabatheans. Attacked by the people of Medeba, a town near Mt. Nebo, John and his company were overcome and the goods carried off. A little later Jonathan and Simon learned that there was to be a great wedding among the people of Medeba; they crossed the Jordan, lay in wait for the joyous procession, and took full vengeance for their brother John. Returning, Jonathan found the Syrian general waiting for him at the Jordan where an indecisive battle was fought.

Disloyalty of high priest. The victorious Syrians proceeded to establish garrisons at many strongholds throughout the land. The high priest now showed

his sympathy with the foreign rule by taking down the wall of the inner court of the temple that marked the separation of the Jews and the Gentiles who had been admitted only to the outer court. When this priest soon afterward died from a stroke of paralysis or something of that nature, loyal Jews very naturally interpreted it as a judgment upon him.

Jonathan high priest. For a time the high priesthood was vacant and then, strangely enough, it fell to Jonathan who had won the confidence of the Hasidim at home and had made peace with the Syrian general. Different claimants for the throne found it to their advantage to confirm him in the office; but alas, a wretched pretender treacherously got him into his power and put him to death, fearing his support of the young king.

Political liberty. A more legitimate heir to the throne recognized the older brother Simon as high priest and in order to secure the Jews' support for his rule declared their land free of tribute. From this decree, 143 B. C., the Jews dated a new era. The Syrian garrisons were still in the land, but Simon gained the strongholds that controlled the roads to the Philistine plain and to the south. The next year he took the Jerusalem citadel, which for twenty-six years had been a constant menace to the freedom of the city and temple. The following year, the people in a great assembly declared Simon civil governor, military chief, and high priest forever until there should arise a faithful prophet.

Twenty-five years of war. Under the wonderful

family of the Maccabees, the Jewish people had thus secured practical independence, a condition which they had not enjoyed since the death of the good king Josiah, more than four and a half centuries earlier. Judas, Eleazar, John, and Jonathan had lost their lives in the struggle that lasted twenty-five years from the revolt in 168 to the recognition of freedom from tribute in 143. At last the elder brother, who had modestly and loyally supported the leadership of Judas and Jonathan, although he himself had large gifts for rule, entered into the heritage for which they had all labored together.

Death of Simon. From 143 to 135 Simon enjoyed with the people the independence and peace so hardly won, and then he was cut off by one of the most dastardly acts of treachery imaginable. His son-in-law, Ptolemy the son of Abubus, had been appointed to the charge of the plain of Jericho. As the aged Simon with two of his sons was on a tour for the good ordering of the land, he came down to Jericho, where Ptolemy made a banquet for the visitors. Here all three were murdered. Since Ptolemy now sent to the Syrian king for forces to aid him in securing the land, it is probable that he had reason to believe the removal of the aged ruler who had secured practical independence from Syria would be acceptable to the court at Antioch.

Important references: Apocrypha, I Maccabees 4:38–7:50; 9:1–11:74; 12:24–14:15; 15:38–16:24.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE STORY OF ESTHER

Occasion of writing. It was probably after Simon had gained political independence for the Jewish state that an over patriotic Jew wrote the story of Esther. Only a small part of the Jewish race was living in Judea where it could enjoy the privileges of its dearly bought political and religious independence. Many had remained in Babylonia and thence had spread far to the eastward in the Persian empire. Under Artaxerxes, we recall that one of these had risen to exalted position in the court at Susa. In the three centuries since Nehemiah's time, the Persian rule had given way to that of Alexander and his successors.

Apparently the eastern Jews had been quite as rigid in maintaining their separate blood and religion as those of Judea. Doubtless they had suffered much on this account. Their co-religionists in Judea, after gaining independence, must have sympathized deeply with their scattered brethren. The Maccabees, we have seen, early reached out across the Jordan and into Galilee to bring their people safely to Jerusalem.

At this era, when the Palestinian Jews had gained their independence and present safety, a skillful narrator wrote the story which was destined to become in later centuries the most popular with his own people of all their literature.

Scene and time. The scene was laid in the palace of Susa in the reign of Xerxes, the father of Artaxerxes under whom Nehemiah lived. This was the Xerxes who succeeded Darius in 485 B. C. and continued his father's effort to conquer Greece, until the decisive battle of Salamis determined that the allied free states were not to be dominated by the imperial Persian government. The story was laid in the early years of Xerxes's reign, just the years that included the great expedition across the Hellespont, with the battles of Thermopylæ, Salamis, and Platæa; but with those world shaping events it is not concerned.

The feast. According to the Jewish story, Xerxes, styled Ahasuerus, made a great six months' feast for the nobles and princes of his vast domain, that extended from India to the region south of Egypt. Then in the court of the garden of the king's palace, he made a week's feast for all the people who were in Susa. The scene was one of Oriental magnificence and bounty such as has seldom been witnessed. Between the great marble columns were hung curtains of green and blue fastened to silver rings with cords of fine linen and purple. Upon the brilliant pavement of porphyry and varicolored marble were set golden and silver couches. Silent attendants glided among the guests, offering each choicest wine such as only kings were wont to drink, poured out into gold cups of curious form and workmanship. As the guests quaffed the wine they noted that no two cups were alike; each was a separate work of the artificer's skill.

At the same time in the harem the beautiful and

proud queen was feasting the ladies of the realm. The king himself drank until on the last day of the feast he lost all sense of decency. No doubt in his drunken braggadocio he had been boasting of the queen's rare beauty. Now, to prove his boast, he sent the seven eunuchs who ministered in his presence with command that the queen should come and exhibit her beauty before the princes and the people.

Vashti's refusal. With the spirit of one fit to be the queen of a great realm, the beautiful lady flatly refused to present herself before the drunken feasters. With tipsy dignity Xerxes holds conference with his conclave of seven chief princes skilled in the law of the Medes and Persians. Memucan speaks for them all: "Vashti the queen has not simply wronged the king; she has started a general rebellion of wives. If her act goes unpunished, no one of us will be able longer to rule his spouse. Then there will be enough of despising and wrath. Let the king make a wholesome example of the queen by divorcing her with an unchangeable decree of the Medes and Persians."

The decree of divorce. The maudlin group gave solemn approval, and the wonderful courier system, by which the great Darius had anticipated Rome in knitting together an empire, was put into instant operation. Over the level country swift horsemen galloped, handing on the decree to the riders on sure-footed mules who carried it up over the crags of the great mountains, and on to the camel riders who went out over the arid regions where neither horse nor mule could live. So through the great empire the foundations of society

were safe when the wives of the princes learned that not even a queen might disobey her husband, drunk or sober. The clever writer of the little, liberty-loving state thus gave us the first scene of his story.

Esther chosen. When the king's hot anger passed and he began to think about Vashti, the servants proposed to him that the most beautiful maidens of the empire should be brought together that he might select a wife in her place. Among these fair maidens was a certain Jewish orphan who had been brought up as a daughter of her older cousin Mordecai, an attendant at the king's palace. This Jewish damsel pleased Xerxes best of all and was put in Vashti's place. A great coronation feast was held in her honor, her race being all the while kept a secret.

The plot discovered. Her cousin's place was to sit in the great square tower at the entrance of the palace, where the Grand Vizier and others awaited the king's pleasure. Here Mordecai learned of a plot by two of the court officers to assassinate Xerxes. He managed to get the information to the queen, who informed the king in her relative's name. The incident was duly recorded in the royal annals, though no reward was given Mordecai at the time.

Haman and Mordecai. Now there arose to power a new favorite of the king named Haman who became the chief minister of state, before whom all the princes and courtiers who waited in the king's entrance tower must do homage. For some unexplained reason Mordecai persistently refused to obey the command to do obeisance. Haman in great wrath determined to have

a splendid vengeance, not simply upon this one palace attendant, but upon all his race scattered through the empire.

Pur cast. The decree of death. Daily throughout the whole year, from the first to the twelfth month, Pur, the lot, was cast before Haman. Only then, it would seem, did the lot indicate a favorable time for Haman to lay his charges before the king. He presented his case skillfully, calling the attention of the monarch to the fact that scattered through all his kingdom was a people which followed its own laws rather than those of the empire. So Xerxes gave permission to Haman to send out a decree in the king's name for the destruction of all the Jews in the empire. Again the messengers went forth to carry the decree to every satrap and governor, that all the Jews be slain eleven months from the date of the document.

The mourning. Esther's decision. When the decree had gone forth, the king and his chancellor sat down for a social drinking bout; but the city of Susa was in much perplexity and wherever the messengers passed they left the Jewish population in great mourning. They fasted, wailing and lying in sackcloth and ashes. Mordecai mourning in the broad place before the palace gate was reported to Esther by her maidens. When the queen sent to learn the cause, she was informed of the decree and charged to plead with the king. Now she had not been called before the king for thirty days; and to go unsummoned was death, unless the king should choose to extend his golden

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scepter to the visitor. Yet, at Mordecai's behest, Esther decided to go and perish if need be.

The invitation. After fasting and prayer, clad in her royal robes, the queen entered unbidden into the inner court where the king sat upon his throne. As she stood before him in all her beauty, the king extended his scepter for her to touch and bade her make her petition known. All she asked was that the king and his chancellor should come to a banquet which she had prepared. The king knew that this must be only preliminary to some more important request, so at the supper he asked again for her petition. In answer she invited them to another banquet the next day, at which time she would make known her request.

Mordecai in the gate. Going out from the first day's feasting in great pride and joy, Haman found the stubborn Mordecai waiting in the king's outer chamber and instantly all his joy was turned to bitter hate. At home he boasted to his wife and assembled friends of all his honors and wealth and of the queen's especial favor that day, but added that all this counted for nothing while the Jew Mordecai sat in the king's gate. His wife suggested that he have an enormous gallows built and the next morning ask the king to have Mordecai hanged, so that he might go merrily to the banquet.

That very night it happened that the king was sleepless and concluded to have the royal annals read to him. Perhaps he could think of nothing more likely to induce speedy slumber. As the reading went on, it

came to the part which told of Mordecai's exposing the plot against the king's life. Here the king was wide awake. What had been done for this Mordecai? Nothing! Seeking counsel, the king asked who was in the outer court. With the morning, bright and early, Haman had come, ready to make request for Mordecai's life. The king asked him immediately what could be done for the man whom he delighted to honor.

Haman supposed that this could be no other than himself and suggested that the man might ride through the city upon the king's own horse, in royal apparel, and conducted by one of the most noble princes of the land. Haman proved to be the noble prince who had to conduct Mordecai in royal state, proclaiming before him through the city: "Thus shall it be done for the man whom the king delighteth to honor."

After this public humiliation Haman hastened home, where his wife and counselors advised him that Mordecai would completely triumph over him. He was in foreboding mood when the king's officers conducted him to the queen's banquet.

Haman's fate. Events now moved quickly to a conclusion for Haman. When the king again bade Esther make known her petition, she told him that she and her people had been sold to be destroyed and slain, greatly to the king's loss. In hot indignation he asked who and where was the man who had presumed to do this. The queen replied, "An adversary and an enemy, even this wicked Haman." In great agitation the king went out into the palace garden. When he

returned he found Haman fallen down at the queen's feet pleading for mercy and accused him of attempted insult. The attendants understood the king's meaning and led off the recent favorite, while one of them suggested that Haman's gallows were already prepared. The king said: "Hang him thereon."

The dilemma. Haman's house was given to Esther and she placed Mordecai over it. To him too the king gave the seal ring which he had taken back from Haman. Still, the unchangeable decree of the king had gone forth and all the race of Esther and Mordecai were condemned to death.

The new decree. Again the swift riders went forth with a new decree. Over plain and mountain and desert, they rode. Wherever they passed they left the Jews in gladness and feasting, for this decree gave the doomed ones freedom to defend themselves when attacked by their enemies. So when the day appointed for the slaughter came, the Jews resisted, while the princes, satraps, and governors, fearing Mordecai the new Vizier, helped them.

The Feast of Purim. The enemies of the Jews fell on that day of awful slaughter to the number of seventy-five thousand. In commemoration of this deliverance, Mordecai established the Feast of Purim, named for the Purim, the lots, which Haman cast. The season became a yearly occasion of feasting and gladness, and of sending portions to one another and gifts to the poor.

How much historic fact there may be back of this remarkable story we cannot tell. Certain it is that

since the days of the Maccabees the Feast of Purim has been observed with great rejoicing by the Jews scattered far and wide. It has served to perpetuate their racial antipathies unfortunately, far more than their higher moral and religious ideals.

Important Biblical reference: The book of Esther.

CHAPTER XXV

JOHN HYRCANUS AND HIS UNWORTHY SONS

John succeeds Simon. The ingrate Ptolemy had intended to kill all the sons of Simon, but John who was not with his father was forewarned and had the agents of Ptolemy put to death when they came to assassinate him. This son of the beloved Simon was far more acceptable to the people than Ptolemy, who was soon shut up in his blood stained fortress and besieged by the forces of John. Unfortunately the wife of Simon and mother of John was a prisoner here and her son-in-law threatened to dash her headlong from the walls if the fortress were assaulted. To save his mother from such fate John raised the siege. This gave opportunity for Ptolemy to escape across the Jordan where he disappears from the history, but not without first having murdered the mother.

Tributary to Syria. The Syrian king Antiochus arrived on the scene too late to coöperate with Ptolemy, but his forces soon appeared in the land and besieged John in Jerusalem. After severe sufferings for those in the city, terms were made by which the Syrians accepted tribute and hostages and withdrew from the land. For some seven years the country continued subject to Syrian tribute, and Jewish forces formed a part of the great army which Antiochus led against the Parthians in the east.

Parthia. The later struggles between the Romans and the Parthians for the control of the eastern world give general historic interest to the Parthian kingdom. For a hundred years before the time of John, it had been growing up out of the ruins of Alexander's dominions in Persia. Since the death of Antiochus Epiphanes it had risen to great power and now extended westward to include Mesopotamia. The present Antiochus (Antiochus VII) was at first highly successful, but a little later met his death in a disastrous battle; wounded, he threw himself down from a rock to escape being taken alive.

Expansion under John. Samaritan temple destroyed. The death of the Syrian king made complete independence for the Jews again possible. John took advantage of the opportunity to extend his sway from Judea over the peoples east of the Jordan, the Idumeans at the south, and the Samaritans at the north of Judea. He captured the ancient city of Shechem, on the shoulder of land between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, and destroyed the Samaritan temple on the summit of Gerizim; this had stood as a rival of the Jerusalem temple for almost three hundred years.

Idumeans incorporated. The Idumeans, ancient Edomites, who had taken possession of the southern part of Judea during the Babylonian exile, were so completely subdued by John that he was able to give them the hard choice of moving out of the land or adopting the rites of the Jewish religion. They adopted the latter alternative and were incorporated with the Jewish people.

Troubles with Samaritans. Both groups, the Samaritans and Idumeans, proved dangerous elements in the Jewish state. John was soon forced to besiege Samaria, the strong Samaritan city which had been the capital of northern Israel in the old days. Hatred between the Samaritans and the Jews continued on through the centuries. When they were all under Roman rule in the first Christian century they had no dealings with each other and the dispute was bitter as to whether Gerizim or Jerusalem was the right place to worship God.

First step toward Herod's rule. The Idumeans proved an even more dangerous force within the state. It was a hated Idumean, Herod, who ruled Palestine with cruel hand at the time of the birth of Jesus. The story of how this came about we shall follow later. The first step we note now; it was taken when John Hyrcanus, the son of Simon, forcibly incorporated the Idumeans into the Jewish state and church.

John's territory. The rule of John now extended from the desert on the south and east to Mt. Carmel and the southern part of the plain of Esdraelon on the north, and to the sea on the west. The little territory of Judas's day had been multiplied three or fourfold.

Internal division. Now again there appears the old division within Judaism which had cost the defeat and death of Judas a generation before. It will be remembered that the party of the strict religionists had not cared for political independence nor for military success, except as their right to observe their relig-

ious ceremonies might be immediately endangered.

Pharisees. From the time of Jonathan the Jewish historian Josephus begins to apply the name Pharisees to those strict religionists who were known as Hasidim in the days of Judas. Pharisee probably means separatist, and is a very appropriate name for those who would separate themselves from all secular ambitions of the state and devote their whole lives to observing and maintaining the ceremonies of religion.

John and Pharisees. John was at first most friendly with the Pharisees. To some of them, however, it was an offense to have John hold the office of high priest. Although of priestly family, he was not of the line of David's priest Zadok to which the law now limited the high priesthood. It was over this issue that trouble arose between John and the Pharisees which led to the removal of men of this sect from positions of authority.

The priestly party. In the days of struggle for independence, there had been many Jews who did not care to have their people separate from the rest of the Syrian kingdom either religiously or politically. This Hellenizing (Greek) party seems to have been especially strong among the priests, many of whom in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes had deserted the temple sacrifices for the games in the Greek gymnasium set up in Jerusalem. Even members of the high priestly family were prominent Hellenists. With political independence maintained under Simon and John, sympathy with foreign rule drops out of sight, but the aris-

tocratic, priestly party has no sympathy with the unworldly separatism of the Pharisees.

Sadducees. By their attitude toward his rule the Pharisees forced John into coöperation with the other party. Now, or perhaps a little later, this other party became known as the Sadducees, a name supposed to be derived from Zadok the founder of the high priestly family. The Pharisees and Sadducees who appear so prominently in the New Testament were thus the outgrowth of the two tendencies which marked the inner division of Judaism in the second century before Christ.

Origin of sects. It is not difficult to trace these two tendencies back still further to the times of Nehemiah and Ezra. The separatist tendency was absolutely necessary then to save the worship of the God of Israel in Palestine, and the willingness to die for the law was perhaps more essential under the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. Like many good things which become evils when they are overdone and kept up too long, Pharisaism had an honorable origin.

Aristobulus king. With the death of John Hyrcanus in 105 B. C., the glory of the Maccabean rule passed away. John left the high priesthood to his son Aristobulus and the civil government to his wife. Aristobulus was not satisfied with the division and quickly managed to imprison his mother and also three of his four brothers. Neither his father John nor grandfather Simon had assumed the title of king. The name offended many of the people who looked forward to a restoration of the line of David and wished no king of any other descent. Now they had to endure

in Aristobulus a high priest not of the family of Zadok and one who assumed the title of king, though not of the Davidic line.

Perhaps most of the people would have become reconciled, in the course of time, to this state of affairs if the Maccabeans of the third and fourth generations had been at once moderate and strong rulers. They were instead men who did not know at all how to deal with the internal divisions of their state and often cared more for their own power than for the welfare of the people.

Expansion under Aristobulus. So Aristobulus imprisoned his mother and brothers and called himself king as well as high priest. Besides he favored the adoption of Greek customs and ideas. By a war of conquest, he extended his territory northward, adding a large part of Iturea to Judea. Iturea, the name later applied to a district, north east of Galilee, may at this time have referred to Galilee itself. If so, it was during the short reign of Aristobulus that Galilee became Judaized as we find it in New Testament times.

Death of Antigonus and Aristobulus. The king loved his fourth brother Antigonus and treated him with favor, but some of the courtiers laid a plot to prove Antigonus disloyal. Aristobulus had fallen sick and sent for his brother to come to him unarmed, agreeing with those who had accused him that if Antigonus came armed he should be killed. They then informed Antigonus that the king wished to see him in his new armor. So they made him seem guilty and he was killed in the palace. The king's sickness soon

proved fatal and he died after a reign of only one year, suffering remorse for the murder of his beloved brother.

Alexander king. Perhaps we ought not to blame Aristobulus for imprisoning Alexander Jannæus who was now released and became king. He was of a restless, unbridled character and might well be distrusted. His father had never wanted this son near him, but now at the age of twenty-three, in 104 B. C., he inherited the rule won by the services of his ancestors. His reign of twenty-six years was a period of much suffering and constant uncertainty for the people.

Trouble with Egpytians. He soon had his nation mixed up in the Egyptian struggle between the queen Cleopatra and her son Ptolemy Lathurus, for he attacked the Greek cities on the Philistine plain and they called Lathurus from Cyprus to protect them. This brought Cleopatra's army into Palestine, which was saved from return to Egyptian rule only by the loyalty to Cleopatra of her Jewish subjects in Egypt and the plea of their general for his fellow countrymen in Palestine.

Riot at the temple. Next Jannæus made successful expeditions against the cities east of the Jordan and on the seacoast plain, and forced the Hellenic inhabitants into Judaism. Then he brought upon himself the wrath of his own people by his wilful changing of the ceremonial in the temple while he was officiating as high priest. It may seem a small matter, but it led to awful civil struggle. At the feast of the Tabernacles, he poured the water, symbolic of fruitfulness,

upon the ground instead of the altar. The worshippers standing about with the citrons used in the worship in their hands, in hot indignation, threw these at him. In the riot that followed, the royal mercenaries slew six thousand men before the temple enclosure was cleared. Then the king had a wooden enclosure built about the altar to shut off the people while he performed the sacrifices as priest.

Civil war. The Pharisees waited their time for vengeance. This came when the king returned to Jerusalem after a most disastrous expedition against an Arabian sheik. Civil war broke out against him and lasted for five years. It is said that fifty thousand lost their lives in the struggle. At last some who were hostile to Jannæus went over to him to save their weakened country from falling again under Syrian rule. Thus restored to power, the king took most horrible vengeance upon his enemies. When eight hundred had been appointed for execution, he had the throats of their wives and children cut before their eyes, after which they themselves were slain. The king watched the executions as he reclined at a drinking feast.

Closing days. Not long afterward Jannæus was involved in a conflict between the king of Syria and an Arabian king Aretas. In this he suffered disastrous defeat, but finally succeeded in making terms with Aretas, while the later years of his reign were marked by successful expeditions against the Greek cities across the Jordan. Returning victorious to his capital, he

received all outward marks of honor and, dying soon afterward, he was buried with great pomp.

Unworthy Maccabees. Foreign influences, against which the early Maccabees had struggled with such heroism, were welcomed by the Jewish state under the rule of these two brothers, Aristobulus and Alexander, who reigned from 105 to 78 B. C. At his death Alexander left the government which centered at Jerusalem extended over a large part of the territory that David and Solomon had once ruled. The state seemed fair and strong, but inwardly it was full of all enmity and division and ready to fall a prey to foreign rule.

Important reference: Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book XIII, Chapters XI–XV.

CHAPTER XXVI

POMPEY TAKES CONTROL

Alexandra the friend of the Pharisees. With the death of Alexander Jannæus the positions of the Sadducees and Pharisees suddenly changed. The story was that the king advised his wife, to whom he left the civil power, to seek the friendship of the Pharisees. The wife's brother Simon ben Shetach was a very distinguished Pharisee, and it may be that the queen needed no advice from her dying husband to lead her to change the policy of the government. The elder son named Hyrcanus was made high priest, while his mother maintained her civil and military power with an army of mercenaries.

Schools. The exiled Pharisees came back; those who had been imprisoned were released. Jewish tradition has it that the queen's brother had elementary schools established all over the land for the instruction of the children in reading and learning the law. In the earlier days it had been the duty of the fathers to teach the children the written law of the Lord, and from a very early time the ability to read and write was apparently quite widespread among the Hebrew people. Whether it was now or somewhat later that a regular school system was established, the rise of these schools among the Jews is always recognized as a very important step in the history of education.

Temple tax. Worship in the temple had been somewhat dependent upon the contributions of the wealthy, but Simon succeeded in enforcing a poll tax of one-half shekel per man for the regular support of the Jerusalem sacrifices. Nehemiah had fixed the tax at one-third of a shekel, but evidently this had not proved enough; perhaps also it had not all been collected in the times of confusion.

The Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin or council of elders, which included the ruling priests and also scribes, was given large powers to decide in all judicial and religious matters. This must have reduced somewhat the direct authority both of the civil ruler and the high priest, and it must have increased the influence of the leading Pharisees and professional students of the law, the scribes, who were now admitted to membership in the Sanhedrin.

Sadducees persecuted. Fortresses assigned. Later Pharisees looked back upon the nine years of Alexandra's reign (78 to 69 B. C.) as a golden age. As such we might regard it with them, if history had preserved only records of the things of which we have been speaking. Unfortunately the Pharisees proved little if any more merciful towards their opponents than the Sadducees had been when Jannæus was ruling. Many were put to death and the survivors joined themselves to the queen's younger son Aristobulus, who came to his mother and pleaded with her that these men might be spared and permitted to occupy the fortresses in different parts of the land. The queen would not trust them in the three strongholds where her treasures

were stored, but allowed them to find safety by occupying a number of strong places.

After this arrangement, things seem to have gone on quietly for a short time. The queen who had seen long years of civil strife, as the wife first of Aristobulus and then of Jannæus, may well have rejoiced in the arrangement she had made. Her eldest son was content to exercise the functions of high priest while the Sanhedrin really controlled matters in Jerusalem, and the more active elements of the Sadducees were scattered in the different fortresses where they could not come into clash with the Pharisaic leaders of Jerusalem.

Aristobulus rebels. Then the queen was taken dangerously ill, and her younger son saw the opportunity for which he had no doubt been waiting. Stealing away from the city by night he soon had his friends aroused throughout the land and in a fortnight had a large number of followers and they were in control of many fortresses. The queen was too ill to act and soon died. Hyrcanus as the elder son was proclaimed king in Jerusalem, but Aristobulus defeated him in a battle near Jericho and forced him to resign both his high priestly and royal offices.

The happy day of Pharisaism was now at an end, for the Sadducees with their political ambitions for the state came back to power under the active and ambitious leadership of Aristobulus. Hyrcanus was disposed to submit, and things might have gone on in comparative peace, had it not been that the governor of Idumea took a hand in affairs at the capital.

Antipater supports Hyrcanus. When John Hyr-

canus, grandfather of the present Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, annexed Idumea and forced the people to adopt the Jewish religion, he appointed one Antipater as governor of the district. Now the son, also named Antipater, was occupying his father's position. Just as ambitious as Aristobulus, he was probably an abler man. He saw a chance by supporting the legitimate claims of Hyrcanus to bring himself into greater power. So he stirred up Hyrcanus to fight for the throne and brought the Arabian king Aretas into alliance. The forces of Aristobulus were defeated and the usurping king himself forced to take refuge on the strongly walled temple hill.

Onias's prayer. Out of this sad time of civil war and fratricidal strife, there comes the story of one pious old man who saw the real nature of the conflict and its sure consequences. Like Balaam of old, this man, Onias by name, had gained a great reputation as able to bring down the divine blessing or curse. The followers of Hyrcanus brought him forth to pray for the discomfiture of the Sadducean party who were besieged on the temple hill. Instead he stood up and said: "O God, the King of the whole world, since those that stand now with me are thy people, and those that are besieged are also thy priests, I beseech thee, that thou wilt neither hearken to the prayers of those against these, nor bring to effect what these pray against those."

Rome in Syria. In this state of affairs, when people and priests were fighting against each other and victory for either must mean weakening of the nation,

suddenly a new factor was brought into the struggle. In earlier days Rome had interfered in the east to prevent the Syrian kingdom from being too large and strong. Now the political situation had changed; Syria itself had fallen under Roman rule. Pompey had put down the revolt of the king of Pontus in Asia Minor, conquered the king of Armenia, and brought to an end the dying Syrian state, with its capital at Antioch whence so many armies had gone forth against Palestine.

Scaurus comes. The Roman conqueror was now planning to march further east to extend his power as far as the Euphrates. Before undertaking this perilous expedition against the Parthians, he must have his base well established throughout all Syria. So Pompey's general Scaurus was already in Damascus and was looking out with interest toward Palestine when Aretas in support of Hyrcanus was besieging Aristobulus on the temple hill. Scaurus promptly moved southward and was met near the boundaries of Judea by representatives of the contending forces. Concluding it was better to drive off the Arabian army than to besiege the stronghold, he compelled Aretas to withdraw and left Aristobulus in control.

Pompey comes. A little later, in the spring of 63 B. C., Pompey himself came to Damascus. The rival factions of Judea lost no time in laying their claims before him. A third group was represented at this conference composed of those who were tired of the Maccabees, their wars and strifes, and wanted only the rule of their priests. This was the old extreme at-

titude of the separatists who did not care about political independence and could not see the dangers to their religion in the rule of foreign powers.

Pompey takes control. This party now got its wish; Rome stepped in and took control. Aristobulus, with some of the old Maccabean courage, prepared to resist Pompey. His followers defended themselves desperately on the temple hill, but the supporters of Hyrcanus had admitted the Romans to the city. On a June sabbath, the Romans breached the strong walls and cut down the priests who were quietly ministering at the altar, along with some twelve thousand of the brave defenders.

63 B. C. The year 63 B. C. was one of interest in Roman history, marked as it was by the consulship of Cicero, the conspiracy of Catiline, and the birth of Augustus. In Jewish history it saw the close of the heroic Maccabean era and the beginning of the fateful Roman rule.

Jews in Rome. Aristobulus and his sons were reserved to march before the chariot of Pompey, when he should return to Rome to receive his third triumph, the most splendid that the city had ever seen. With them went others of the Jewish captives, all of whom were allowed to settle in the city after they had served as a spectacle in the triumph. In this way there arose a Jewish community in Rome which grew by accessions from the east until it became an important element in the Imperial City. It has even been suggested that Pompey was thus unwittingly the founder of the Roman Church. Quite possibly many of the descendants

of these early settlers were in the church to which Saint Paul wrote, about a hundred and fifteen years later.

Pompey in the temple. Pompey was one of the most generous of Roman conquerors, but he won the bitter hatred of the orthodox Jews by penetrating the inmost sanctuary of the temple. In the outer room, which only the priests might legally enter, Pompey saw the golden table of shew-bread and the seven branched golden lamp. Touching nothing of the offerings of gold which the faithful Jews had deposited here, he passed on through the great curtain into the holy of holies.

All sorts of stories were circulated to account for the fact that the Jews were so scrupulous in guarding their inmost sanctuary from sight. It was said that their object of worship was an ass's head or, as we said before, Moses, as an old, long bearded man riding on an ass. The Gentiles, we noted, could not understand a temple without an image. When Pompey pushed back the great curtain and peered into the dark, cubical room, he found nothing at all. So for all his curiosity he had little gratification and won the undying hatred of the faithful Jews.

Pompey's death. When Pompey was defeated at Pharsalia fifteen years later, fled to Egypt, and was assassinated as he stepped ashore in that land, a Jewish poet wrote: "And I delayed until God showed me that insolent one lying pierced upon the borders of Egypt, made of less account than him that is least upon earth and sea; his dead body lying corrupted upon the

waves in great contempt, and there was none to bury him; for He set him at nought in dishonor. . . . He said: I will be lord of the earth and sea; and perceived not that it is God who is great, mighty in his great strength."

Rebellions. For some six years after Jerusalem came under Roman rule, the land enjoyed comparative peace. Shorn of the title of king, the inoffensive Hyrcanus was left as nominal head of the state with the astute Antipater as his minister. Then came a series of uprisings, first under Alexander, son of Aristobulus, who had escaped from Pompey's train on the way to Rome, and then under Aristobulus himself who managed to get back after a time. The father was captured and sent back to Rome, but Alexander remained in the land and soon raised another rebellion. Antipater was sent to persuade Alexander and his doomed followers to lay down their arms, but to no avail, and they soon suffered disastrous defeat near Mt. Tabor.

The spirit of independence was still strong in the line of Maccabees and in the thirty thousand men who rallied to the support of Alexander against the Roman legate Gabinius, but independence could not be won from Rome as it had been from the tottering kingdom of Syria a century before.

Important reference: Josephus, Jewish War, Book I, Chapters II–VIII.

CHAPTER XXVII

RISE OF THE HOUSE OF HEROD

The second triumvirate. Before Alexander's effort to overthrow the Roman rule in Palestine had been put down, the second Roman triumvirate was formed. Pompey took control of the far west in Spain; Cæsar undertook the first expedition into Britain; Crassus, the third member, had countless wealth and wanted military fame. An expedition against the Parthians might give him this.

Crassus in the east. Pompey had respected the temple treasure, but Crassus knew how to get rich. He promised to be satisfied with a great present and then plundered the temple besides. Instead of military success, defeat and death met this shameless robber in Parthia. His lieutenant Cassius, coming back to Palestine with the remnant of the army, had to put down the fourth revolt against Roman rule that had occurred there within the five troubled years from 57 to 52 B. C.

Antipater helps Cæsar. Three years later Cæsar crossed the Rubicon and the period of civil wars began for Rome. After Pompey's death Cæsar came to Alexandria with an inadequate force. He was in a perilous situation there when Antipater came to his aid with reinforcements. In return Cæsar relieved the

Jews of tribute and military duty, permitted them to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, restored some cities which Pompey had taken away, and assured them religious liberty.

Cæsar's favors. Though Antipater appears as the real leader whose services gained all these benefits for the Jewish people, the Idumean was too wise to seek for himslf the nominal leadership of the state. Instead, civil authority was restored to Hyrcanus and his titles, both as tetrarch and high priest, were made hereditary. The few short years of Cæsar's rule formed a happy day for the people of Judea, except the leading Jews who looked with bitterness on the growing power of Antipater.

Antipater's sons. Soon the prime minister was able to assign the governorship of Judea to his elder son Phasæl and that of Galilee to his other son Herod. The latter was " exceedingly young " when he took up the duties of his office. Of strong physique and notable appearance, he was renowned for his skill in horsemanship, in throwing the lance, and shooting the bow. On one day he had killed no fewer than forty specimens of large game — bears, stags, and wild asses. Once assassins surprised him in the bath; when he sprang out unarmed and unclothed, they fled from his majestic presence. Such stories illustrate the impression of strength and force that he made upon the people of his time.

Herod and the Sanhedrin. Herod undertook the duties of his governorship with the same vigor that marked him in athletic sports. He hunted down and

completely broke up a band of brigands that had been spreading terror in Galilee. The proconsul of Syria and the people of Galilee appreciated this service, but the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem saw in it an opportunity to curb the growing power of the Idumean family. The young governor was summoned to trial for trespassing upon their sole right to inflict the death penalty, as he had upon the leader and other members of the band of robbers. At his father's advice Herod appeared before the council with a body guard and clad in a purple robe with bright armor shining underneath.

The proconsul and Herod. At first the grave elders were too much abashed to take strong action, but after a little, a celebrated Pharisee spoke freely, warning them that they could not pass over such defiance of the law. Sextus Cæsar, the proconsul of Syria, had warned Hyrcanus that Herod must not be condemned. So when it became evident that the case was going against the young governor of Galilee, Hyrcanus adjourned the court and gave him opportunity to escape from Jerusalem.

Herod withdrew to Damascus and Sextus Cæsar appointed him governor of Coele-Syria north of Galilee. He was just the kind of man the proconsul was looking for to help him maintain order in these eastern regions, so distant from Rome and so recently brought under her rule.

Herod threatens Jerusalem. The whole incident reflects on a small scale the scenes that were transpiring in Rome during those years when the Senate was struggling to maintain its power against the growing

strength of great individual leaders like Pompey and Cæsar. Herod quickly decided to cross his Rubicon. He raised an army and marched against Jerusalem, determined to overthrow Hyrcanus. His father and brother urged him to withdraw to Galilee. He did so after he had demonstrated his power to terrorize those who had threatened him.

Herod supports Cassius. Now came the assassination of Julius Cæsar. The Roman world was again in convulsion to its farthest borders. The conspirators hastened, Brutus to Macedonia and Cassius to Syria. They must raise great levies to meet Cæsar's avengers. Cassius laid heavy taxes upon Palestine, not hesitating to use the powers of the Syrian governorship to which he had been appointed by the murdered Cæsar. When some of the border cities failed to meet their allotments, their inhabitants were sold as slaves. Herod managed to get the hundred talents apportioned to his district with promptness and was promised the kingship of Judea, if Cassius and his associates should win the coming struggle for the control of the Roman world.

Uprising in Palestine. Two years and a half were spent in preparing for the contest. On the one side were Mark Antony and Julius Cæsar's nephew Octavian, later known as Augustus, on the other Brutus and Cassius. In the autumn of 42 B. C. their armies met at Philippi in Macedonia, but before this time Palestine was again in confusion. Antipater, whose strong hand and clear head were greatly needed, had been poisoned. With the withdrawal of Cassius from Syria, uprisings had occurred. One of these was dealt with by Herod's

older brother Phasæl, the governor at Jerusalem; the other, headed by Antigonus, son of Aristobulus, was put down by Herod.

Phasæl and Herod tetrarchs. The Idumean brothers were evidently in command of the situation, but they had supported Brutus and Cassius and now these were overthrown at Philippi. The Jewish leaders hostile to the brothers thought they saw their opportunity and sent deputations to Antony as he came to take control of the east. But Antony had known Antipater and was convinced that his sons were best qualified to maintain order in Palestine. He appointed them tetrarchs for the civil control of the Jewish districts, taking this title away from Hyrcanus who was left only the high priesthood.

Secret of Advancement. Whatever party won in the Roman strife, the house of Herod seemed to gain new power. The secret was, no doubt, that these men were really best fitted to do for Palestine the main thing that the Roman leaders wanted — to preserve order and keep a solid front on this eastern border against the advance of the Parthians. Antipater was evidently a man of towering ambition, working ceaselessly to establish himself and his descendants in real control of the state that subdued and absorbed his own people, yet his was not a vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself; he was content to let the legitimate heir of the Maccabean line enjoy the titles of authority even under the Roman rule.

Mariamne. Herod, too, recognized the people's loyalty to the Maccabees and shrewdly gained for his

family heirship in both the lines of Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, for he betrothed to himself Mariamne, who was granddaughter of Hyrcanus on her mother's side and of Aristobulus through her father.

Affairs well arranged. It must have seemed to Antony, as he gave himself up to a round of pleasure in Egypt, in company with the fascinating queen Cleopatra, that he had things well arranged for peace and order in Judea and Galilee. The two competent brothers, loyal to each other, were keeping order in the civil state, with the aged Hyrcanus quite content to exercise the imposing office of high priest. There were those of the people who preferred the energetic rule of the line of Aristobulus with its courage to fight even against Rome, but Herod had proved able to put down the rebellion of Antigonus and the granddaughter of Aristobulus was soon to become his wife.

Parthians and Antigonus. Antigonus had not given up his ambitions. In these he won the support of the Parthian king, who had made himself master of northern Syria in these times of confusion. Two Parthian armies moved south into Galilee. Phasæl and Hyrcanus were persuaded to come to the camp of the invaders to treat for peace. Herod saw the trick and warned his brother against going, but he and Hyrcanus went and were promptly thrown into chains. Many Jews were ready to support the son of Aristobulus, and Herod's only safety lay in flight.

Herod's flight to Masada. At night with his family, his betrothed, and a few followers he set out southward. At the edge of the wilderness, a few miles

beyond Bethlehem, he was forced to defend himself on the summit of an isolated, conical mountain, where later, in more prosperous years, he built a fortress and called it Herodium. At length with great difficulty the little band got through to Masada, an impregnable fortress, in the rugged wilderness near the southern end of the Dead Sea. The difficult and desolate character of the region is vividly pictured in the story of the ride to En Gedi, with which Scott's Talisman begins. The fortress is at the summit of precipitous cliffs that form a mountain top on the shore of the sea, standing apart and cut off from the high land behind. It is approached only by a steep and narrow path that runs along a razor edge of rock. Here the little band could defend itself indefinitely against Antigonus and any of his Parthian supporters.

To Petra, to Egypt. Leaving his brother Joseph in command, Herod himself pushed on through the wilderness to the old, rock bound city of Petra, hoping to get money to ransom Phasæl from the Arabian king whose father had supported Antipater and Hyrcanus in the first struggle against Aristobulus. Disappointed in this quest through the Arabs' fear of the Parthians, Herod went on to Egypt, where he hoped to find his patron Antony. Disappointment again met him, for Antony, aroused at last to the critical dangers, had gone to Tyre, the only Syrian city that was not in the hands of the Parthians.

To Rome. The next move was characteristic of the man Herod. Refusing Cleopatra's offer of the command of an Egyptian army, he sailed straight for

Rome. Here he found that Antony had come from Tyre.

Herod appointed king. Antony and Octavian saw in Herod the man for the hour of Roman need in Palestine and secured from the Senate a unanimous decree making him king of Judea. He who had but just been a fugitive, hunted out of Palestine, now left the Senate walking between the rulers of the Roman world, Antony and Octavian, to the temple of Jupiter on the Capitol. Here he offered sacrifice, after the Roman custom of inducting officials into office. Herod's grandfather had been forced to adopt the Jewish religion, but it had not penetrated the Idumean soul far enough to give Herod any scruples against sacrificing to Jupiter. The autumn of 40 B. C. thus found Herod with the title of king of Judea and the authority of Rome at his back.

Important reference: Josephus, Jewish War, Book I, Chapters IX–XIV.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HEROD THE KING

The rule of Antigonus. The Senate had appointed Herod king, but for the time being Roman rule was not effective in Palestine. Antigonus supported by the Parthians was ruling there as king and high priest. He had shown himself persistent and ready to risk danger in his efforts to secure the throne and overthrow the Roman rule. Many of the people loyally supported this last ruler of the Maccabean line.

Once having attained his goal, Antigonus showed himself lacking in the abilities of either military leader or statesman. The Parthian general turned over to him his uncle Hyrcanus and Phasæl. He had the ears of the old high priest cut off, so that he might be forever disqualified for the priestly office, which could be occupied only by one without physical blemish. Then he turned the mutilated old man back to the Parthians to be carried off to the far east. Phasæl escaped vengeance by killing himself. Antigonus also proved himself unable or unwilling to restrain his allies who alienated the Galileans by their plundering.

Herod in Palestine. When, in the spring of 39 B. C., Herod landed at Ptolemais on the coast of Galilee, the people of that region were ready to join him in his expedition against Judea. Marching down the

coast, he captured Joppa and passing through the Idumean territory south of Judea soon put an end to Antigonus's investment of Masada. When his success had attracted many to his standard, with the promise of Roman aid, he undertook the siege of Jerusalem.

Failure of Roman aid. Antigonus proved himself master of one art, that of bribing the Roman general Silo, who had been ordered to support Herod. Silo insisted that his troops must withdraw into winter quarters. Down in the warm Jordan valley they plundered the city of Jericho and refused to take any action in aid of Herod until spring. For Herod there was no such rest. Insurgent bands in the mountains of Galilee must be suppressed by him. His brother Joseph was sent meantime to maintain order in Idumea. While Herod was occupied in Galilee, Silo was summoned to Syria to fight against the Parthians. Another Roman general sent to support Herod proved as untrustworthy as Silo, and Herod was left to work out his own problem.

Confusion of Herod's cause. Antony now came to Syria to deal in earnest with the Parthians. Herod joined him in the siege of Samosata on the Euphrates and rendered such assistance that Antony assured him full Roman aid in Palestine. Herod returned to find all in confusion. The people of Galilee had risen and drowned many of his adherents in the lake. Joseph had risked battle with Antigonus and had been defeated and killed. Even his native Idumea was in a threatening state. Attacking the situation with his full vigor, Herod soon had Galilee under control and,

marching southward toward Jerusalem, met and defeated an army of Antigonus.

Herod's marriage. He was now in a position to undertake once more the siege of Jerusalem, but the coming on of winter delayed operations for a time. The spring of 37 B. C. saw all in readiness at last for the crucial test. While the siege engines were being erected against the north wall of the city, from which side alone the place could be approached on level ground, Herod went to Samaria to marry Mariamne, to whom he had been betrothed for five years.

Antigonus overthrown. When all was in readiness, Sosius, the general sent by Antony, appeared at Jerusalem with a large force. More than two months were required to batter a way through the first and second walls. Then the inner court of the temple was stormed and the upper city entered. Amid frightful slaughter, Herod prevented the Roman soldiers from desecrating the temple itself and checked their accustomed plunder by his own personal gifts. Antigonus in tears begged for mercy at the feet of Sosius who, with roars of laughter, changed his name from Antigonus to that of the Grecian maiden Antigone. Thus scorned, the last ruler of the Maccabean line was sent to Antony at Antioch and was there put to death on Herod's appeal. He was the first king to be scourged and then beheaded, like a common criminal, by the Romans.

Herod's opponents destroyed. Herod, king in name for nearly three years, was now king in fact, "master of a city in ruins, king of a nation that hated

him." Nearly every member of the Sanhedrin who had ten years before summoned the young governor of Galilee to answer for his deeds was now put to death. Others of prominence who had supported Antigonus were likewise disposed of, and their property was confiscated.

The high priesthood. To settle the question of the high priesthood, Herod summoned from the Jewish colony in Babylon a priest named Ananel and had him inducted into the office. With this began the inner tragedy in the rival intrigues of the women of Herod's family. Alexandra, daughter of Hyrcanus, and mother of Mariamne, could not endure this appointment while she had a son eligible to succeed his grandfather. She began plotting with Cleopatra and Antony to obtain the appointment of her son Aristobulus. Antony advised Herod to favor the young man if possible, and so he deposed Ananel and appointed Aristobulus, then a youth in his seventeenth year.

Jealousy of Aristobulus. Only a few months passed before Herod's jealousy was aroused by the plaudits of the people when the tall and wonderfully attractive youth officiated, in his beautiful robes, at the feast of Tabernacles. Herod felt sure that the people would not be satisfied until the civil power also was assigned to this representative of the royal and priestly line, in whom all the glory of the Maccabean family seemed to be blossoming anew.

Jericho with its palm groves and tropical beauty was the fashionable resort. Here Alexandra invited Herod and Aristobulus to a banquet, a few days after

the fateful feast when the people had allowed their enthusiasm such dangerous expression. Under pretense of sport, in the bathing pool where the young men were refreshing themselves, members of Herod's guard did his will in drowning the young high priest. Herod lamented loud, with tears that may have had some sincere grief behind them, when he saw Mariamne's brother lying still and dead, so young and beautiful. The last heir of the Maccabean line who could possibly threaten Herod's hold upon the throne was now removed, but fear for the security of his rule could not be taken from Herod's heart. In his later years his own sons were to fall similar victims to his jealous fears.

Herod's lamentations and the magnificent funeral accorded Aristobulus may have deceived the people, but not the mother. Alexandra again appealed to Cleopatra, who desired Herod's kingdom annexed to her own and was ready for intrigue against him at any time. The Egyptian queen prevailed upon Antony to summon Herod to answer for the crime. It was a critical moment for the king, but he persuaded Antony and escaped judgment.

Actium 31 B. C. In 31 B. C. the inevitable clash came between Octavian and Antony. It was Cleopatra's jealousy of Herod that saved him from being with the forces of Antony at the decisive battle of Actium. She had hoped to dispose of Herod by having him sent off on a perilous expedition against the Arabians. Instead he was quite successful on the expedition and, after Antony's downfall, he boldly went

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to Rhodes to urge upon Octavian his faithfulness to his former patron as ground for Octavian's trust.

Octavian and Herod. The new world dictator knew the worth of the bold and energetic king in the task of maintaining order on the eastern border of the realm. He confirmed him in his office and added territory to his kingdom, until Herod ruled from Jerusalem a larger state than that of David and Solomon. From this time on until his death in 4 B. C. Herod was the undisputed ruler in Palestine.

From the point of view of Octavian, now styled Augustus, Herod's rule was generally most satisfactory. Augustus wisely gave up the Roman ambition for conquest beyond the Euphrates and counted Syria and Palestine the natural limits of the empire. In the portion of this border territory assigned to him, Herod was able almost always to maintain order and to preserve a strong state threatened by no foe from the east.

The Augustan age. Augustus's ambition to spread Greek culture throughout the empire found hearty support in Herod's court where Greek scholars and artists were welcomed as intimate friends and advisers. Alexander and Aristobulus the sons of Herod and Mariamne, who were expected to rule after their father, were sent to Rome to be educated in the brilliant literary circle of the Augustan court. Here they were under the instruction of Pollio the friend of Virgil. Herod used the revenues of his state to revive the Olympian games and to erect splendid temples, colonnades, gymnasiums, and theaters at Nicopolis, a city

founded by Augustus on the west coast of Greece, at Rhodes, in the famous cities of Phœnicia, and in Damascus, as well as in various places of Palestine itself.

Cæsarea. In his territory his building enterprises were indeed magnificent. His land lacked a good harbor, so he built one with a great stone breakwater two hundred feet wide, sheltering a basin as large as that of the port of Athens. On the mole were buildings and a delightful promenade for hot evenings. Besides the harbor there rose a magnificent new city, named Cæsarea in honor of Augustus. Mariners far out at sea could descry the temple that stood on an elevation where there was a colossal statue of Augustus and another of Roma.

Sebaste. On the hill of Samaria where Omri and Ahab, eight hundred years before, had built the capital of northern Israel and where Herod and Mariamne had been married, the king erected another beautiful city, named in honor of Cæsar, Sebaste, the Greek equivalent of Augusta. Though twenty centuries have passed, many of the Greek columns still stand marking where the colonnaded road encircled as a crown the summit of the beautiful oval hill. Here may be seen too the foundations and columns, still standing, of the public buildings for worship and recreation that marked every Greek city.

Jerusalem. In Jerusalem the king erected a splendid palace, gymnasium, and theater, so that the old Jewish city must have taken on much of the appearance of Athens itself. One artistic blemish there was, however, as Herod gazed about his capital. On the

acropolis stood the dingy little temple of Zerubbabel, over whose poverty the builders in Haggai's day had felt so discouraged. For five hundred years this modest structure had been the center of the Jewish worship. Desperately the people had fought to maintain its sanctity to Jehovah alone.

Temple rebuilt. Herod proposed to rebuild the temple. The people were alarmed, thinking it but an excuse to take away their sacred place. At length scruples were overcome and building began in the year 17 B. C. Enormous masonry walls and substructures were built about the rugged, rock summit, on the southern slope of which Solomon's palaces and public buildings had stood. An artificial plain was thus erected, with terraces at different levels for the outer and inner courts and for the temple itself, which stood on the highest central elevation. Extensive colonnades and magnificent gateways, together with buildings for the use of the priests and Sanhedrin, occupied some of the great area of the temple enclosure.

The temple proper maintained the essential features of that of Solomon: the porch with the altar before it; back of the porch the holy place, with the inner chamber beyond. But curiously enough, the height of the building was doubled and the porch was extended with side wings and lofty elevation until it formed a front of imposing dimensions. Ten years of labor were necessary before the buildings were ready for dedication, and for many years thereafter work was progressing on the surrounding structures.

Commerce and taxes. Without great development

of foreign trade by the caravan of the desert and the ships of the Mediterranean, it would have been impossible for Herod to tax from his people the means for all the luxury and splendor that made his court a miniature of that at Rome.

Important reference: Josephus, Jewish War, Book I, Chapters XV–XXII.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE BEAST IN MAN AND THE PROPHET OF GOD

Death of Hyrcanus and Mariamne. Outward splendor, inward fear, jealousy, plots, and death tell the story of Herod's court. Next after the young Aristobulus, the aged Hyrcanus fell victim to the king's fear that the people would rise in support of some one of the Maccabean line. Not long after Herod's rule was firmly established by the favor of Augustus, the king's crafty sister Salome contrived to make it appear that the proud and beautiful Mariamne was plotting to poison him. Condemned, she met her death in a manner becoming the noblest of the Maccabees.

Death of Alexandra. Now Herod sought to drown his grief in feasting and hunting until his excesses brought on an illness that for a time unhinged his reason. While he lay sick at Sebaste, Mariamne's mother tried to get possession of the fortified places in Jerusalem. Herod recovered sufficiently to take command of affairs and this plotter was condemned to death.

Death of older sons. At a later time his own sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, now returned from Rome, fell under suspicion through the rival plottings in the court. The king accused them before Augustus who effected a reconciliation, but the plotting went on and

at last they were condemned to death in the year 7 B. C. Then Herod's oldest son, the son of his first wife Doris, who had been the arch intriguer against his brothers, was himself found guilty of conspiring and was executed, five days before Herod died.

Mad suspicions. From the time of Mariamne's execution in 29 B. C., it almost seems that Herod was insane on the subject of plots against his throne. His sister, his oldest son, and others were skillful intriguers, it is true, but it does seem that the Herod of the earlier days would have been better able to distinguish friends from foes than the older man proved to be. His family troubles cost Herod something of the confidence of Augustus and prevented, it was reported, his receiving even greater territory that Augustus had planned to assign him.

Strength of rule. Politically Herod was able to maintain himself throughout his long reign, partly from the fact that he understood, better than any governor from Rome could do, how to avoid pressing too hard upon the strong religious sentiments of the people. A thorough pagan at heart, he honored many deities in many cities, but in Jerusalem he generally respected the worship of Jehovah. If rebellion threatened, the resources of the autocrat were always at hand. The fortified towns all over the land were strongly garrisoned, a network of spies kept the king informed, and large gatherings of the people were forbidden.

Thus for thirty-three years, this man called Herod the Great, strange combination of power with weakness, of generous impulse and strong affection with sus-

picion and cruelty, kept the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire in remarkable freedom from military strife. Besides, he made Palestine a notable center of Græco-Roman civilization.

Death of Herod. At length, worn out with struggle and passion, he fell victim to a wretched disease. His servants carried him down to Jericho, across the Jordan, up onto the plateau of Moab, and then down to a deep cañon where Calirhoë, the beautiful river, flows down to the Dead Sea. Here copious springs of water, burning hot, gush out from the rock, making one of nature's sanitariums. The hot baths failed to cure the old king's malady and he was carried back to the palm groves and soft airs of Jericho, there to die.

Burial. In the mad rage of his weakness and loneliness, he had planned to have the chief men of the land killed when he died, that there might be genuine mourning. This was not carried out, but the funeral ceremonies for the king were conducted with all outward marks of honor. A great and magnificent procession brought him up from the Jordan valley and finally they buried him in the castle of Herodium which he had built on the mountain top at the border of the wilderness, southeast of Bethlehem.

Birth of a prophet. In the struggle to preserve Judaism from disappearing in the long years of waiting after the exile, we have seen how the prophets disappeared. Priest and scribe with their emphasis upon religious ceremony were the leaders of the faithful, while men of selfish ambition and bloody tyranny strove for the rule of the state. Prophecy with its burning

message of justice, kindness, and compassion in God and man had long been silent. But in the latter end of Herod's reign, a true prophet, like unto Elijah of old, was born in the hill country of Judah. His father was a priest who ministered a portion of each year in the temple.

Wilderness of Judea. As the future prophet grew to young manhood he loved the solitude of the wilderness, which lies between the summit of the Judean mountain range and the deep valley of the Dead Sea. The warm, moisture laden winds from the Mediterranean bring copious rains for a part of the year to the western slope of the mountains, but when these winds pass over the hot valley beyond the summit, they retain their moisture so that the eastern slope of the mountains, down almost to their foot, is desert. In this desolate region the youth had wandered and meditated on the evils that prevailed in the land.

Rule of Archelaus. His boyhood was passed in the confusion that followed Herod's death, when the kingdom was split up among three of the remaining sons. Judea, with Idumea at the south and Samaria at the north, had been assigned to the eldest of these, Archelaus. It was in this district, or tetrarchy as it was called, that the priest's son lived. For ten years Archelaus's territory was in sore distress, for the tetrarch was quite unable to keep order as his father had done. Then Augustus heeded the charges that the people brought against him and banished him to Gaul. The future prophet was a boy, perhaps fourteen or fifteen years old, when this occurred.

Evil conditions. Whether his parents, who were old at his birth, were still living we do not know. If Zacharias had continued able to minister in his course at the temple, he must have brought back to the village home sad stories of the misgovernment of Archelaus and of the dissatisfaction of the priests and other leading men in Jerusalem with the way things were being conducted. In his own village the boy knew of the abuses from which his neighbors and all the people suffered; how the tax gatherers were accustomed to enrich themselves by extorting money by violence and by making false accusations against innocent people.

Education of John. As a priest's son, John, for such was the youth's name, may very well have had even more thorough instruction in the ancient history of his people than that given in the synagogue to all the boys. Probably the instruction had centered on the Pentateuch with its laws of priestly ceremonial, but the lives and teachings of the prophets had appealed far more to him. He had read the stirring stories of Elijah who had appeared suddenly from across the Jordan and had taught king Ahab that the God of Israel required even kings to do justice and not to wrong their subjects. He had read the wonderful words of the Great Unknown who had called himself a voice crying in the wilderness, saying, "Make ye straight the way of the Lord." No doubt he had read also the sermons of Amos, Micah, and Isaiah who had taught that, more than all burnt offerings and hymns of praise, God requires that the rich and powerful be just and merciful to the poor and weak, that the mer-

chant be content with a fair price for a good measure of grain. These foundation teachings of the great prophets had been sadly forgotten by the religious as well as the civil leaders.

Rule of Rome. When Augustus was considering the arrangements to be made for Palestine after Herod's death, the deputation of leading Jews who appeared before him at Rome requested that their land might be taken directly under Roman authority as a part of the Syrian province. Perhaps they thought this would give the Sanhedrin more authority than it enjoyed under the rule of a Herod. At the banishment of Archelaus in 6 A. D., the emperor decided to take Judea under direct Roman authority, but in a different way from that which the Jewish representatives had intended. Instead of making them immediately responsible to the Syrian legate, he sent out a procurator, as was customary with districts that were particularly difficult to govern.

When, therefore, John came to manhood, Judea was under the rule of a procurator who lived at Cæsarea, but came up to Jerusalem and occupied Herod's palace at certain seasons of the year. He farmed out the customs to men who committed their collections to tax gatherers, the hated publicans of whom so much is heard in the New Testament. Of the first four procurators we know but little; in the year 26 A. D., Pontius Pilate, a reckless, hard man, came out as the fifth procurator.

The prophet's commission. Early in the adminis-

tration of Pilate, John, who had now grown to mature manhood living an ascetic life in the wilderness, felt the impulse that came to the prophets of old to declare God's truth. Coming into the fertile regions round about the river Jordan he preached repentance unto remission of sins and called upon men to be baptized. A bath of purification was familiar to the Jews as a religious rite. When proselytes were admitted to the Jewish Church, a ceremonial bath was customary. The Essenes, a sort of monastic order of Jews who lived apart in the wilderness, practiced frequent ceremonial ablution. With John baptism was administered once and for all to any who would repent of their sins and enter upon a life of honesty and kindness practiced day by day.

Multitudes flocked to the man of God at the Jordan. Men who had been living the dishonest, cruel lives of publicans and plundering soldiers came asking the desert preacher what they should do. He pointed out their sins without fear or favor, telling the tax gatherers to take only the proper amounts appointed to them and the soldiers to stop plundering and blackmailing the unfortunate people. On all who had property he enjoined a generous sharing with the poor.

The forerunner. The people were in expectation of a Messiah and questioned whether this man of God might not be the longed for deliverer. To such suggestion John made quick denial, declaring himself the forerunner whose work was but a mild preparation for that of the one who would come to baptize them in the

Holy Spirit and fire. That one would thoroughly cleanse and separate, gathering the wheat and burning the chaff.

The fox. Some of John's preaching was done beyond the borders of Judea in the territory of Herod Antipas, younger brother of Archelaus, who was tetrarch of Galilee and the east-Jordan territory. Jesus once styled this Herod "that fox," and such he was, with all the cunning and unscrupulousness of his worst ancestors. Once he made a visit to a half-brother who was living as a private citizen in Rome. The brother entertained Antipas most generously. In return he shamelessly proposed marriage to the brother's wife, Herodias. Ambitious and unscrupulous, she preferred to be the wife of a tetrarch rather than of one who was living as a private citizen.

Imprisonment. John the Baptist fearlessly rebuked Antipas for his unlawful marriage and gained the deadly hatred of Herodias. Antipas arrested the daring preacher on the ground that he was disturbing the peace with the excitement that his preaching was arousing. He imprisoned him in the lonely fortress of Machaerus, at the southern border of his East-Jordan territory, on a steep mountain summit overlooking the Dead Sea.

Death of John. In order to marry Herodias, Antipas had divorced the daughter of the Arabian king Aretas. Naturally enough, this brought war upon him from his wife's father; kings are not wont to permit their daughters to be divorced. Perhaps it was this war that took Antipas and his court to the southern

border fortress where John was imprisoned. The king's birthday coming around, it was celebrated with a drinking feast, war or no war. At the feast, the daughter of Herodias stooped to the part usually performed by slave girls and danced for the amusement of the drunken feasters. Herod was delighted and, in his maudlin recklessness, promised her anything to the half of his kingdom. Instructed by her mother, the girl asked for the head of John, who lay in the dungeon of the great castle. The demand startled Herod into a half sobriety. He knew the danger of killing one whom the people counted a prophet, but his courtiers were witnesses of his promise and he must carry it out.

The first and second Elijah. The famous scene pictures for us the old forces of selfish, beastly life face to face once more with the demands of the ancient prophets for righteousness and purity. The first Elijah, forerunnner of the great prophets, had come from beyond the Jordan and had denounced Ahab and his wife Jezebel who were bringing into Israel the vices of the pagan world. The second Elijah, last of the ancient prophets and forerunner of the new dispensation, met his death in the frowning fortress of Machaerus, beyond the Jordan.

The end of the old era. Jesus declared that among those born of women there was not a greater than John, yet the lesser in the kingdom of heaven was greater than he. The old struggle between the beast in man and the call upward to Godlike living had ended in one era. The new era had already begun, for a

new power had entered human life, even the Divine incarnation in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. John, like the apocalyptists, had looked for a consuming fire. In his imprisonment he questioned whether this meek and gentle one might be the deliverer and sent messengers to ask. The reply was: "Go and tell John the things which ye have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them."

Important references: Luke 1: 5–25, 39–45, 57–80; 3: 1–21; 7: 18–34; Matthew 14: 1–12; Josephus, Antiquities, Book XVIII, Chapter V, §§ 1, 2.

CHAPTER XXX

REVIEW AND CONCLUSION

Scope of study. The present volume has covered a period of more than seven hundred years of Biblical history, from the reign of Manasseh to the death of John the Baptist. The chief characters considered have included:

(1) Six kings and one queen of Judea — Manasseh, Josiah, John Hyrcanus, Aristobulus, Alexander Jannæus, Alexandra, Herod.

(2) Twelve prophets — Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Ezekiel, the Great Unknown, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Joel, Jonah, John the Baptist.

(3) One governor of Judea — Nehemiah.

(4) One scribe — Ezra.

(5) Three great deliverers — Judas, Jonathan, Simon.

(6) Two heroes and a heroine of popular story — Job, Daniel, Esther.

(7) Many philosophers, generally anonymous.

The study has also brought to our notice some of the most famous characters of ancient history outside of the Jewish race — Nebuchadrezzar, Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes, Alexander the Great, Antiochus the Great, Antiochus Epiphanes, Pompey, Cleopatra, Julius Cæsar, Mark Antony, Cæsar Augustus. A mere list

of such famous names of Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Syrian, Egyptian, and Roman history shows how closely the story of the Bible is interwoven with that of the great civilizations of antiquity other than the Jewish.

Position of Palestine. The people of the Bible lived at the bridgehead between Asia and Africa, on the line of connection between the three continents of the eastern hemisphere. Across the bridge of Asia Minor and Syria there moved from the dawn of history the commerce and the armies of the world. The people who dwelt in the mountain-top capital of Judea lived right beside the great highway, which ran along the Philistine plain. If they chose, they might keep themselves somewhat aloof from the traffic which passed at their feet in times of peace. But in times of war they were inevitably brought into the tide of conflict; no conqueror could safely leave their strong hills out of account in moving about the eastern end of the Mediterranean.

Inevitable contacts. Egypt and Babylon. Persia. Manasseh voluntarily aped the worship of Assyria, the great power of his day. His grandson Josiah tried to keep Jehovah's worship free from all foreign admixture, but he was forced to fight against the Pharaoh who was leading his armies from Egypt to annex all the western part of the Assyrian empire. Nebuchadrezzar, driving Egypt back to Africa, took firm possession of the bridgehead. Repeated attempts to throw off the Babylonian rule, relying on help from Egypt, resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and

the transportation of the leading Jews to Babylonia. Cyrus's conquest of Babylon permitted the rebuilding of Jerusalem and reorganization of the Judean state, but now as a sub-province of one of the great satrapies into which the Persian empire was divided. Nehemiah's influence with Artaxerxes made possible the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and the separation of the Jews from their neighbors in Sabbath observance and temple worship.

Greece. Alexander, overthrowing the Persian Empire, brought about the establishment of Greek colonies in the fertile plains that lay about the hills of Palestine. In time, Greek civilization almost absorbed Judaism, until the efforts of Antiochus Epiphanes to hasten the process and force absolute Hellenization upon the Jews aroused the Maccabean revolt and led to the establishment of the most rigid Judaism, at least among the Pharisees.

Rome. In the course of Rome's eastern conquests, Palestine became a part of the borderland of the great empire. This was the first time in three thousand years of recorded history that the land ceased to lie between the chief centers of civilization. She was still, however, in the center of the struggles of the empire for world dominance, and had her part to play in the new battle between the powers of the east and west, Parthia and Rome.

Augustus made Palestine a frontier, giving up the effort of his predecessors to rule beyond the borderlands of the Mediterranean in the heart of Asia. Yet, under the close interrelation of his realm the land was

in vital touch with the artistic, intellectual, and commercial life of the capital.

Danger by absorption. Much of the effort of the loftiest and purest spirits among the Jews, who lived and labored in the seven centuries under review, had to be expended to prevent their people from being absorbed in the successive civilizations that dominated their land and political life. Josiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Great Unknown, Haggai and Zechariah, Nehemiah and Ezra, Judas and Simon all had an important part to play in this task. Through their efforts, supported by many unnamed heroes of the faith who preferred death to giving up their principles, the religion of the God of righteousness, unseen creator and ruler, was preserved through all the dangers of the centuries, until the second Elijah heralded the new day, when truth was no longer to be preserved through separation.

Variety of personalities. Our study has served to show us also what a great variety of men and abilities were needed to develop and preserve Israel's contribution to civilization. Half of the great characters studied are grouped together as prophets, yet how utterly different from one another were many of these. Two men more unlike in their natural temperament than Jeremiah and Ezekiel or Haggai and Zechariah it would be difficult to name, yet neither of these could really have accomplished his work without the support of the other.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Haggai and Zechariah.

Jeremiah in Jerusalem and Ezekiel in Babylon together prepared the exiles for the destruction of Jerusalem and saved them from losing all faith in God when the great blow fell; yet Jeremiah cared not for religious ceremonial and Ezekiel dreamed of the most elaborate organization of worship for the restored community. Haggai was the practical man who saw the next thing to be done and knew how to rouse other men and get it started; Zechariah was the seer of visions who gave men the deep hope and faith necessary to keep up their courage through years of effort and disappointment.

Nehemiah and Ezra. Judas and Simon. Others than the prophets among our leaders offer similar examples of the need of men of different character and interests to accomplish the tasks which were essential. Nehemiah the shrewd courtier and practical statesman and Ezra the student and lawyer supplemented each other wonderfully in building up the wall of stone and the wall of legal separation that made the future of Judaism possible. Judas the impetuous soldier and Simon the astute diplomat were both needed to bring about independence from Syria.

Variety of writings. What a variety of thinkers too were required to meet the needs of the different classes of people. The heart broken appeals of Jeremiah, the gorgeous imagery of Ezekiel and Zechariah, the strange symbols of Daniel, the wondrous songs of the Great Unknown, the dramatic poem of Job, the homely sayings of the Wise, the vivid memoirs of Nehemiah, the inspiring narratives of Jonah and Esther, all these

may serve to suggest the great variety of prose and poetry that expressed the many sided thought of these centuries.

Israel's gift. Israel's great gift to the world was the faith that there is one God, creator and ruler of heaven and earth; that this God is holy and loving; that he requires men to be just and kind toward one another and reverent toward him. Some great thinkers of Egypt, Greece, Rome, and other ancient lands saw some of these truths, but it was in Israel alone that there was a great succession of thinkers and teachers who fully developed this belief and made it the faith of a large part of the nation.

New teachings. Much of this belief had already been developed and taught in the centuries preceding those considered in this volume, but some of its highest features were first revealed through the great leaders whom we have studied. Earlier prophets had taught that God was just and merciful to nations; Jeremiah and Ezekiel were the first to recognize that each individual man stood before God on his own record. Earlier teachers had seen that God and Israel entered into a mutual covenant or contract at Sinai; Jeremiah was the first to realize that until all the people should know Jehovah and have his law written on their very hearts, they could not be truly his people. Earlier prophets had taught that God ruled in the nations round about Israel; but the Great Unknown was the first to declare him the creator of the heavens and the earth. Jeremiah and he were the first to declare also that the supposed gods of other peoples were nothing

at all. Earlier prophets had believed that God was merciful and forgiving toward Israel; the writer of Jonah represented him as ready to forgive the cruel Assyrians if they would but repent and put away their evil. These are some of the points in which the thinkers of the last seven centuries of the old era seem to go beyond the great seers of the earlier centuries.

The old era and the new. We can be very clear in our minds that through the leaders whose deeds and words are recorded in the Old Testament there were revealed and preserved the most precious truths that make life worth living and the world a fit place to live in. Yet John saw that there must be a greater than any of these great leaders still to come. As one passes from the last of the Hebrew prophets who called his wandering people back to the great truths of the Old Testament and takes up the life and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, he should carry with him a clear knowledge of just what the old leaders stood for. Then and then only can one begin to understand why he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven which Jesus introduced is greater than the great prophet.

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